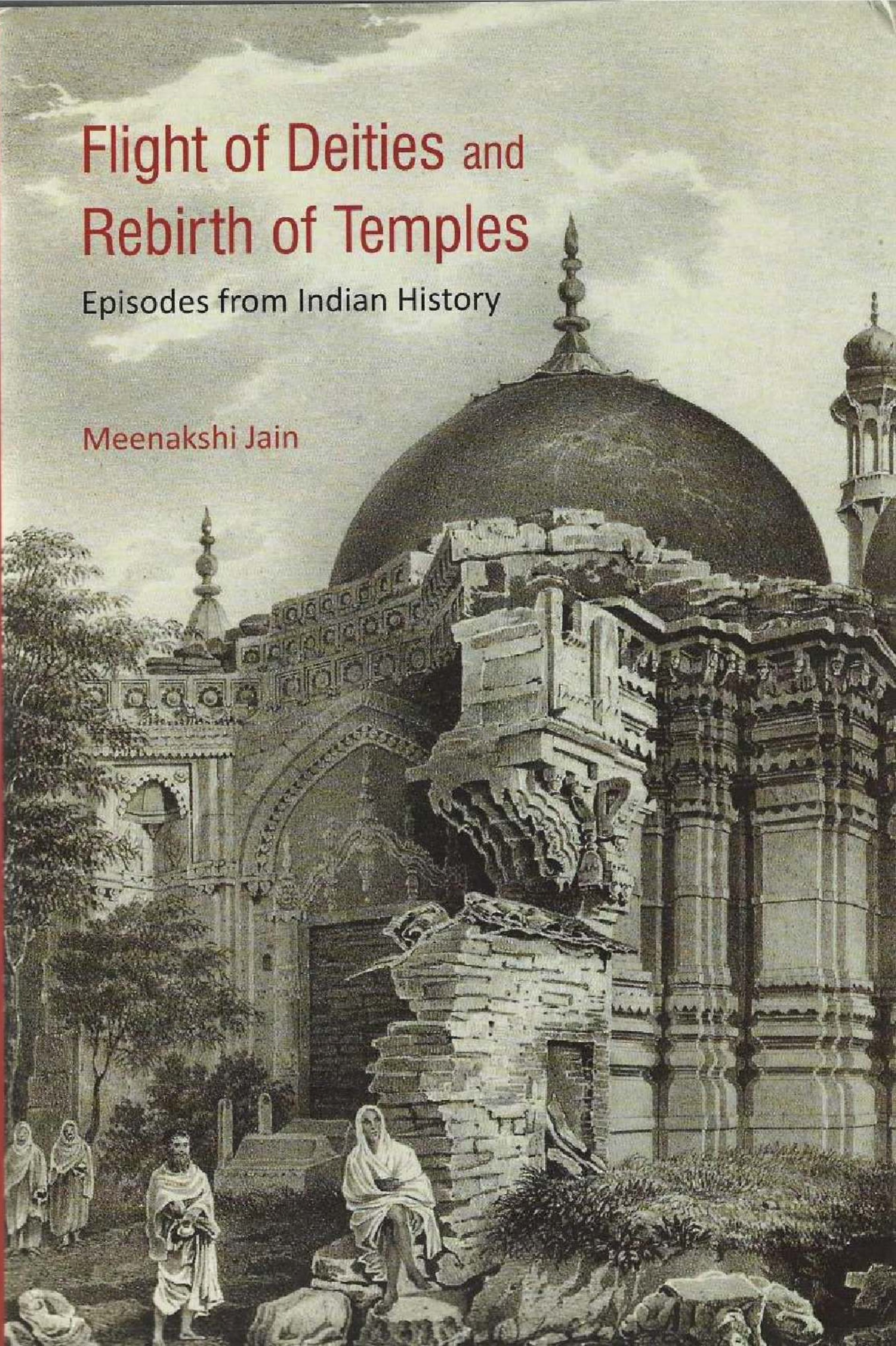
Flight of Deities and Rebirth of Temples

Episodes from Indian History

Meenakshi Jain



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Aryan Books International
New Delhi

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Introduction

Image Appropriation Versus Image Desecration

For the last half century and more, certain academic writings on India have exhibited a remarkable proclivity to extricate Islamic iconoclasm from the religion of Islam. The wholesale destruction of sacred shrines in the subcontinent has been dismissed as "a lust for plunder," unconnected in any way to Quranic injunctions. In a definitive enunciation of this viewpoint, Muhammad Habib declared that the expeditions of Mahmud Ghaznavi,

> ....were not crusades but secular exploits waged for the greed of glory and gold. It is impossible to read a religious motive into them ... His Hindu opponents were infuriated, but not surprised, at what he did; they knew his motives were economic, not religious... (Habib 1967: 81-83).

Muhammad Habib's assertions were perplexing, given the Quran's explicit hostility to idols and idolatry. Before the Islamic advent, idol worship was widely prevalent in Mecca, as attested by Ibn Ishaq (d. 768-69), the earliest biographer of the Prophet (Guillaume 1958: 10, 35-39, 151-153). The Prophet himself led the destruction of 360 idols around Kaaba. Among them were statues of the moon god Hubal, Abraham, and Ishmael. After the idols had been smashed, Muhammad came to the door of Kaaba and proclaimed the new dispensation, "There is no God but God; there is none with him" (Payne 1987: 55-56; Lapidus 1988: 36; Glasse 1989: 179).

Islamic tradition from early on, viewed India as the land *par excellence* of idolatry. One *hadith* described India as the first country where idolatry was practised and stated that ancient Arab idols were of Indian origin (Friedmann 1975: 214-215). Ibn Asir, author of the influential *Kamilu-t Tawarikh,* noted that on the night Mahmud was born, "an idol temple in India, in the vicinity of Parshawar, on the banks of the Sind, fell down" (Elliot and Dowson Vol. II: 269-270). Mahmud Ghaznavi proudly professed himself on his coins, *Mahmud butshikan*, 'Mahmud the breaker of idols.' His standing in the Islamic world rested on two interlinked successes – breaking the idols and de-hoarding the temple treasures of al-Hind (Wink 1997: 321). As Ibn Asir recorded, in recognition of his services, Mahmud became the first Muhammadan king to receive the title of Sultan from the Khalifa.

The cumulative effect of the Islamic onslaughts was a thorough uprooting of the sacred geography of India. It would be a phenomenal task to locate a shrine in northern India that pre-dated the eighteenth century. Yet apologists repudiate the theology of iconoclasm. Rather, they assert Hindu kings routinely dishonoured temples of rivals from their own faith. The practice of desecrating temples of adversaries had been "thoroughly integrated" into Indian political behaviour from around the sixth century CE. The Turks merely "followed and continued established practices."

Further, Hindu temples have been defined as "pre-eminently political institutions." They articulated "the shared sovereignty of king and deity," which made them politically vulnerable (Eaton 2002: 105-107; Eaton and Wagoner 2014:

39-40). A corollary appended to this hypothesis was that temples emerged as centres of political resistance to the new rulers, and had necessarily to be removed.

More recently, it has also been contended that mosques built of temple parts displayed "a productive engagement with local traditions of temple architecture." The reuse of temple columns in mosques required careful architectural planning, and conformed to indigenous principles of design. The most elaborately carved columns were placed on either side of the *mihrab* aisle, and simpler columns in the remaining spaces. What occurred was a mere "translation"; one type of sacred space was translated in terms of another. In the process, a certain degree of communality between the two was communicated (Katherine Kasdorf in Eaton and Wagoner 2014: 45-46; Eaton and Wagoner 2014: 44; Patel 2004: 144-150).

THE MANIFOLD FALLACIES

Conspicuous in the above analyses was the absence of any reference to Hindu notions of sacred. Could the lacuna be attributed to a particular orientation in certain scholarly circles? No instance has been cited of appropriation of temple parts and their radical reconfiguration in a new kind of religious space before the Islamic advent (Willis 2012: 135).

Temples have been downgraded to transactional institutions concerning king and deity alone; divested of all sacredness. The millions who thronged to them over the centuries have simply been erased from history. Also unexplained in the medieval context, what prompted ordinary devotees, far removed from political processes, to endanger their lives to protect deities enshrined in temples? And why were demolished shrines rebuilt again and again, even in the absence of Hindu kings? Also, who led the resistance from which temples?

INDESTRUCTIBLE IMAGES

Interestingly, several works composed in the medieval era asserted that *murtis* were too suffused with divine energy to be felled by iconoclasts. Dhanapala, a Jain poet and scholar who was an eyewitness to the depredations of Mahmud Ghaznavi, in his *Satyapuriya Mahavira Utsaha* (1024 CE), extolled the power of an image of Tirthankara Mahavira at Satyapura (modern Sanchor in southern Rajasthan) that Mahmud failed to destroy; "For can even a large number of stars dim the light of the Sun or snakes swallow Garuda?" (Yadava 1982: 2-4).

An almost identical account of that Mahavira image was presented by Jinaprabhasuri (1261-1333), leader of the Kharatara Gaccha branch of the Shwetambar Jains. In his *Vividtirthakalpa* (1333 CE), he wrote that when the lord of Gajjani (Ghazni) reached Satyapura on his return journey after plundering Gujara (Gujarat), he saw the beautiful temple of Jina and tried to demolish the icon of Mahavira instated there. But neither elephants nor bullocks could uproot the *pratima*. The blows directed at it struck the vandals themselves (Yadava 1982: 4).

Jinaprabhasuri visited ravaged Jain holy sites and recorded the triumph of the faith in every instance of its encounter with Islam. Though kingdoms collapsed and cities were reduced to ruins, Jain images continued "working their magic" (Granoff 1991: 196; Granoff 1998: 130-133). In a similar vein, the *Acara-Dinakara*, a Svetambara text of the fourteenth century, stated that images more than a hundred years old, or those installed and consecrated by the best of men, must continue to be in worship, even if mutilated (Shah and Dhaky: 269).

INTERMENT OF IMAGES

In the consciousness of countless inhabitants of the subcontinent, the Islamic advent became synonymous with destruction of temples and deities. An inscription found at

Etawah fort (UP) of the late twelfth century, of Maharaja Ajayasimha, nephew of Jaichand Gahadavala, stated that the king and his *purohit* had performed a *Chandi mahayaga* (a great sacrifice for Durga) and subsequently placed the image in a pit (*gartta*) so that *mlecchas* could not destroy it,

> ... My rationality has been destroyed because of my fear of the Mlecchas.
>
> With great sorrow, touching her with my head (to honour her), I place this Durga, the dweller of the fort and destroyer of bad luck, into this pit, till the god Skanda turns their (Mlecchas) glory (Sun) to dust.
>
> When ill fate meets the Yavanas, she might re-appear, or manifest herself again amidst uproar.
>
> Until that time I am a fool like a drunkard. (However) let not fear enter you; the gods will quickly return (with victory) along with you (Prasad 1990: 92-94).

The Durga burial was one documented case. North India abounded with stories of deities appearing in the dreams of devotees, directing them to places of their entombment; and of cows shedding milk at particular spots, leading to unearthing of *pratimas* (Granoff 1998: 131). Govindadevaji (Vrindavan), Govardhannathji (Braj), Mahavirji (Rajasthan)... Were these images actually hidden during invasions and subsequently recovered?

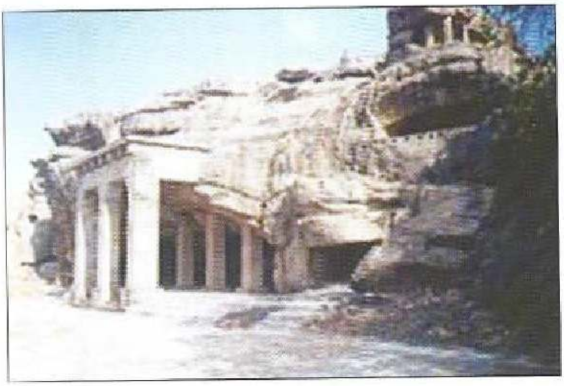
Burial of bronze images occurred on a considerable scale in south India. Dr. R. Nagaswamy, writing in 1987, estimated that over two hundred bronzes had been found in Tamil Nadu alone in the previous decade. Most were unearthed by villagers, not archaeologists. All were found carefully placed, face down, in specially dug pits often lined with brick or stone, and filled with sand for protection. The bronzes had generally not suffered much damage, as they had been interred with deep reverence and extreme care. The intention was clearly to retrieve them in favourable times, and recommence their worship. However, the threat persisted longer than anticipated, and later generations lost track of the buried treasures. These now reappeared sporadically and accidentally (Nagaswamy 1987: 1-2).

The fortuitous recovery of bronzes corroborated the incidence of mass burial in medieval India. A rough calculation by scholars revealed that at least half the missing bronzes were destroyed by Muslims. Equally, many hidden images were never recovered (Dehejia 1990: 124).

In at least four cases, bronzes were found buried along with copper plate charters. The Tiruvalangadu Nataraja was discovered with a copper plate record of Rajendra Chola I, as were the Esalam bronzes. The Tandantottam copper plates were found with a remarkable group of bronzes that included a Nataraja. The finds at Tiruttani Velanceri included two copper plates, one of Aparajita Pallava, the other of Parantaka Chola (Nagaswamy 1987: 2-3).

MEDIEVAL DELIBERATIONS ON ICONOCLASM

The preservation of sanctified spaces and images was a subject of serious concern in medieval India.[1] Temple hagiographies (*mahatmyas*) and site histories (*sthala puranas*), composed in those times, gave considerable thought to the matter. The *Ekalinga Mahatmya*, which related the history of the Ekalinga temple in Mewar, addressed the issue of iconoclasm. Therein, God Vayu told sage Narada that just as the demons had tried to harm the Gods, so the *yavanas* had a natural tendency to destroy divine images. Further, though the Gods had the capacity to retaliate, they understood that conflict between them and the demons was eternal, and each was fated to suffer setback in turn. For periodic dissolution of the world was part of the natural order. Vayu advised that if an image had been desecrated, another should be consecrated to replace it, and in unfavourable times stone images should be preferred to costly metal ones (Granoff 1991: 191-195).



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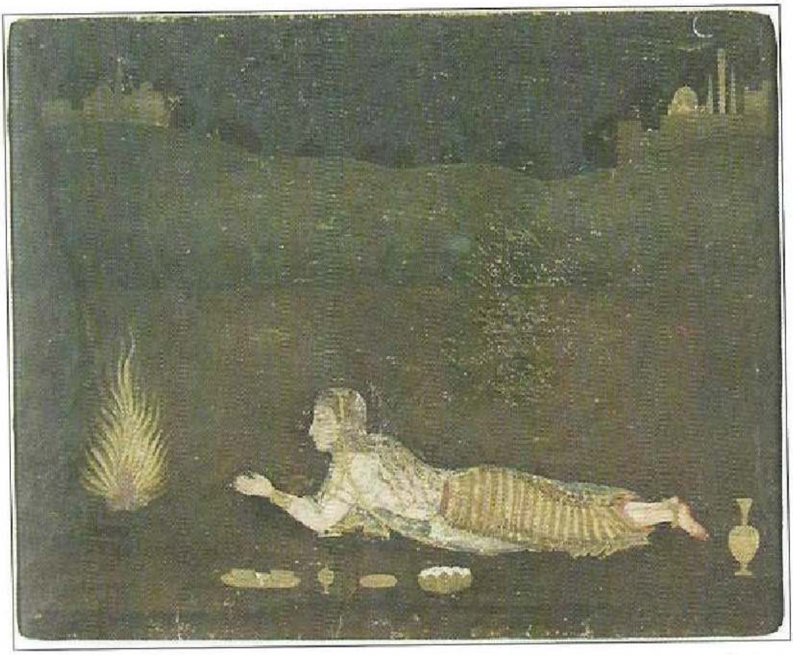

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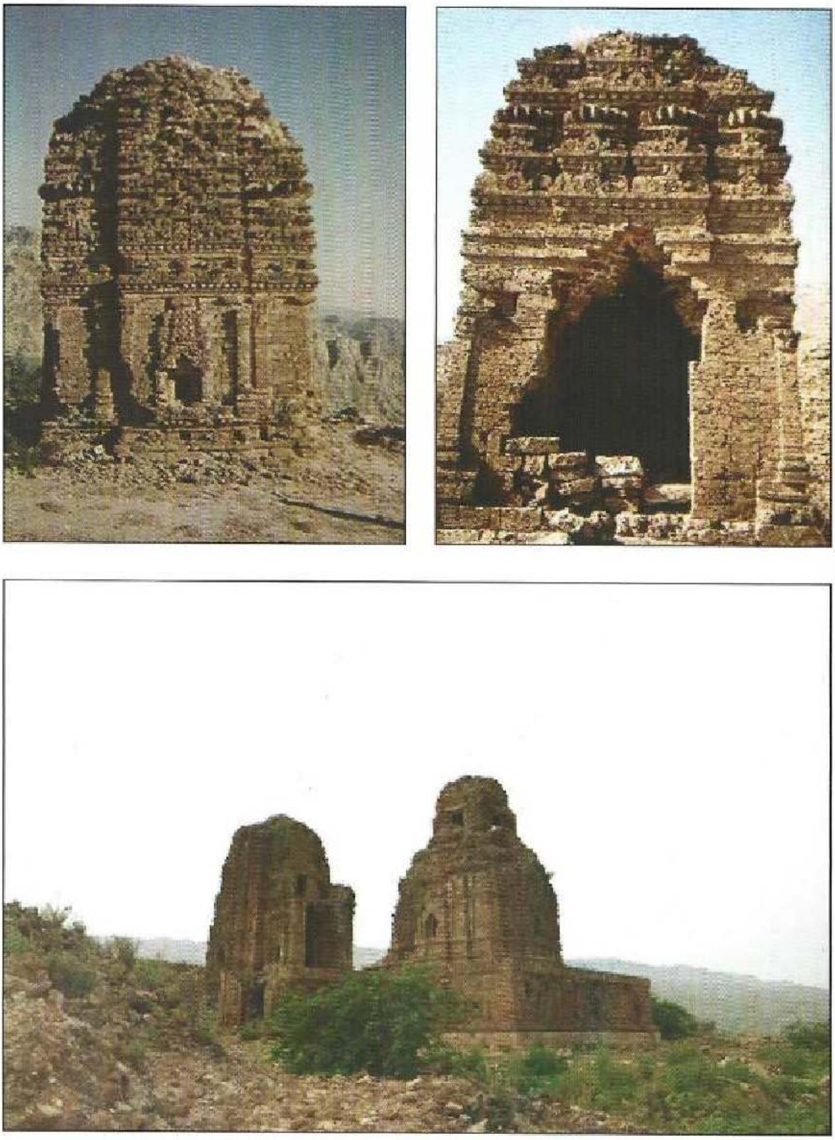

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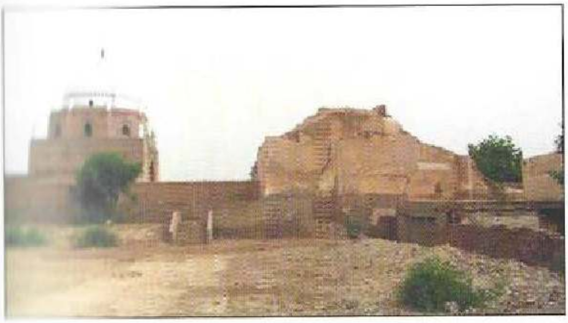

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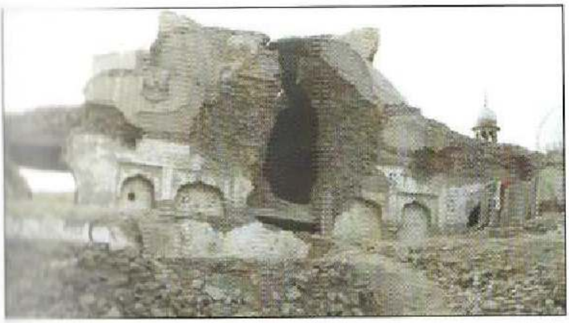

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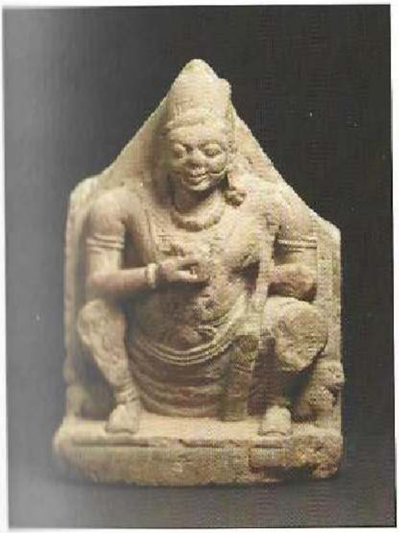

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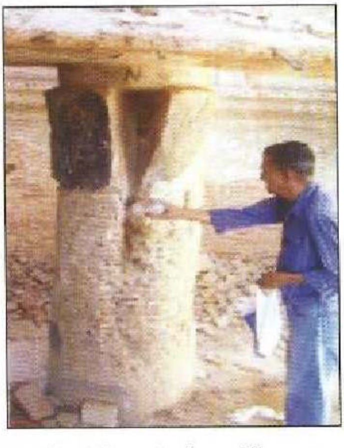

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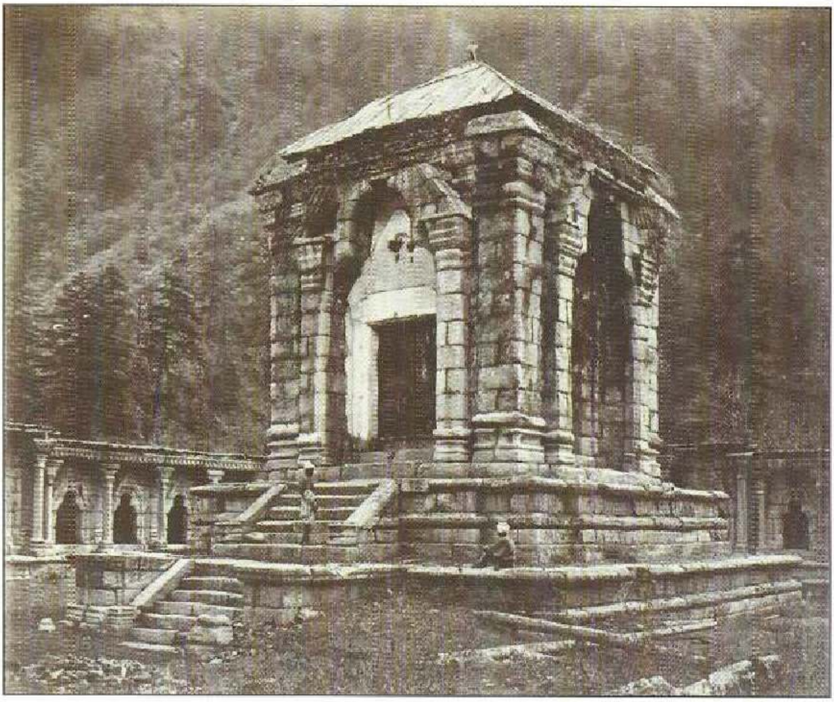

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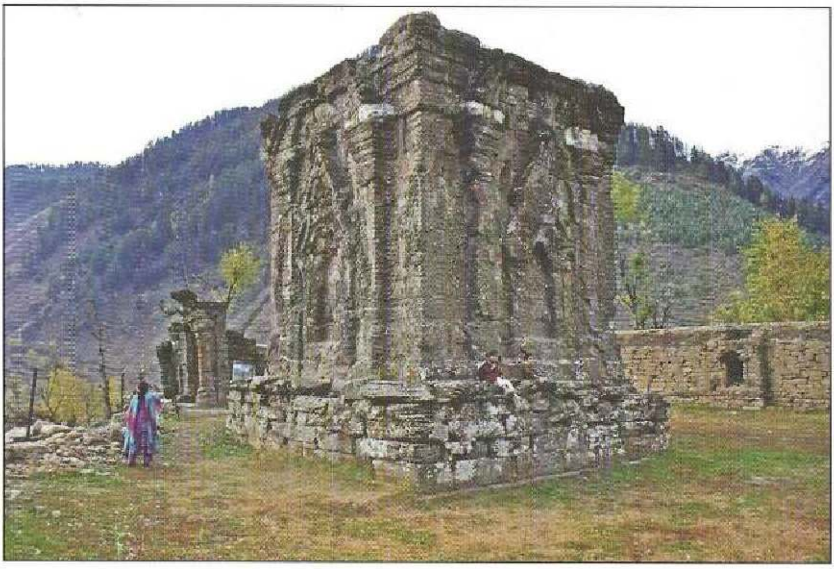

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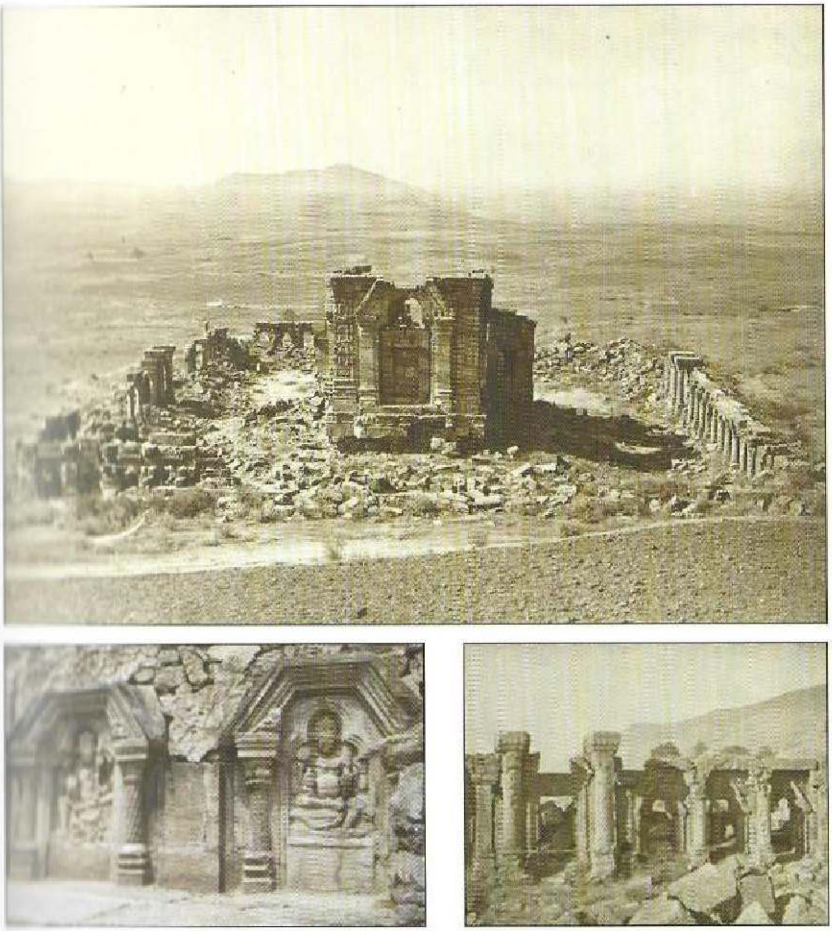

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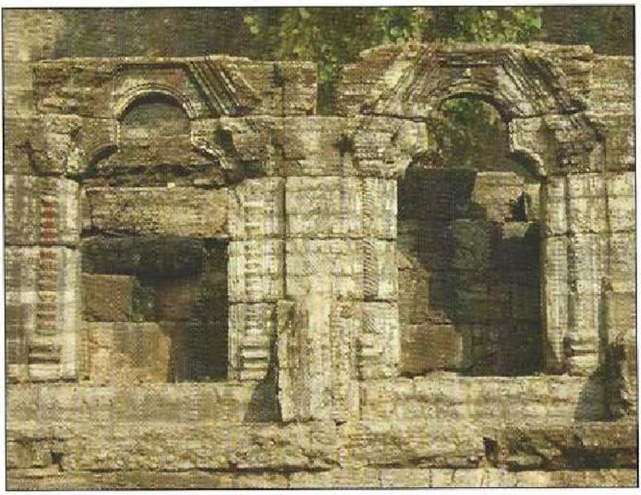

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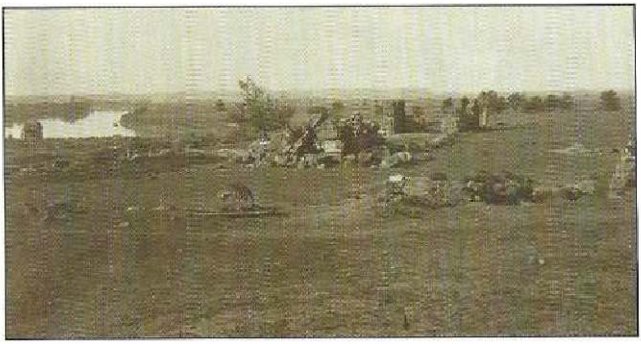

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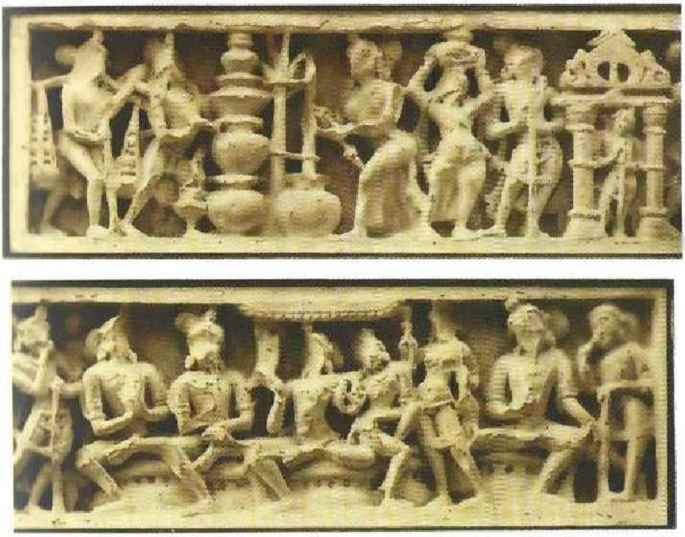

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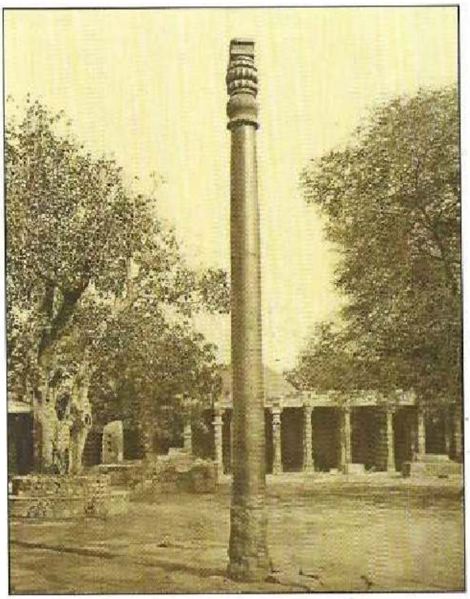

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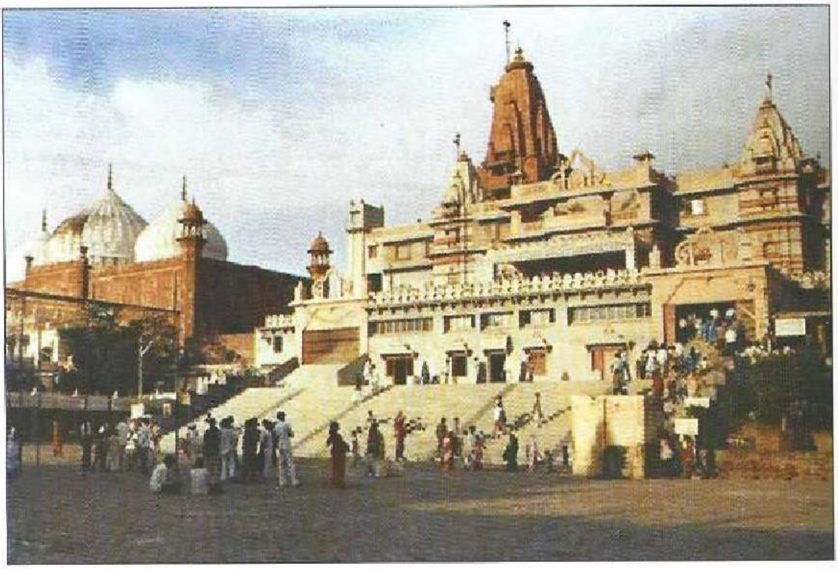

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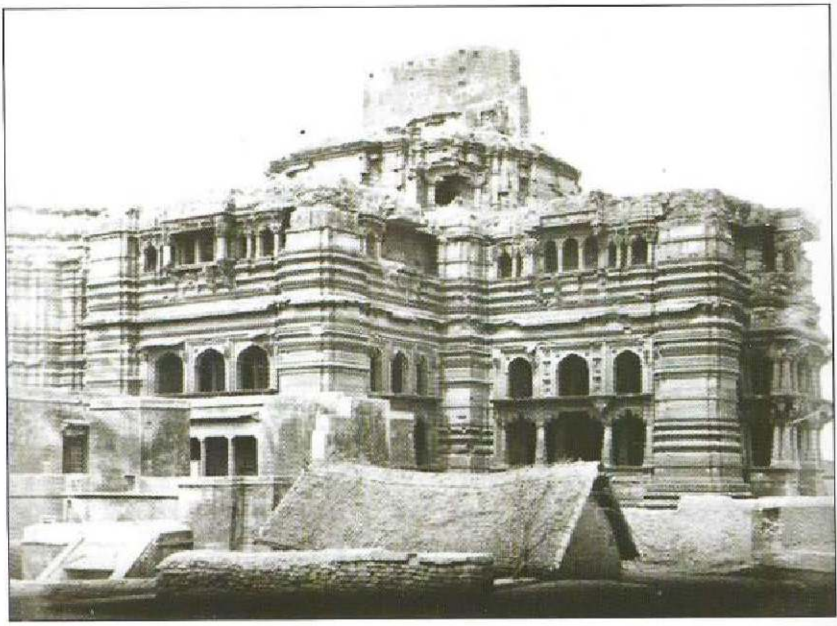

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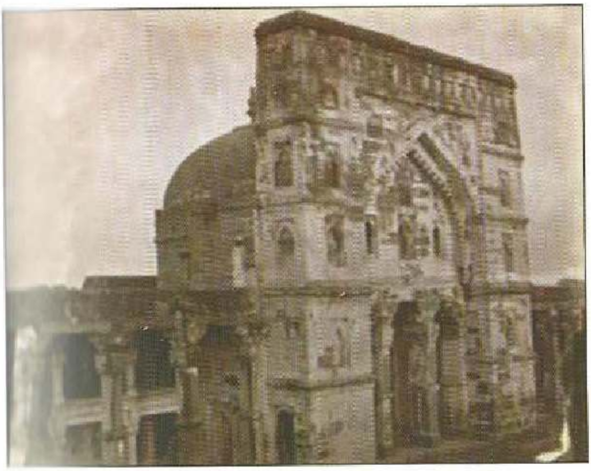

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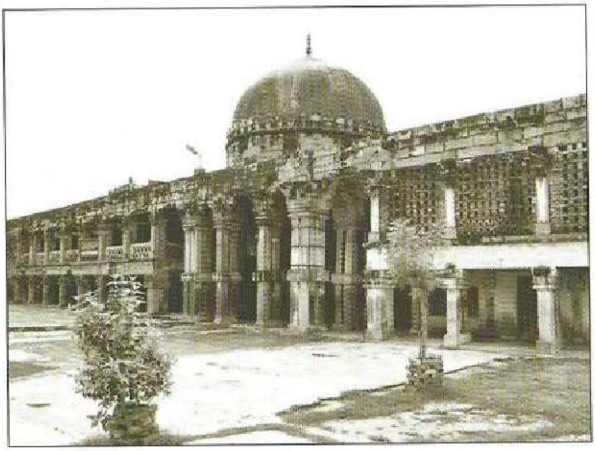

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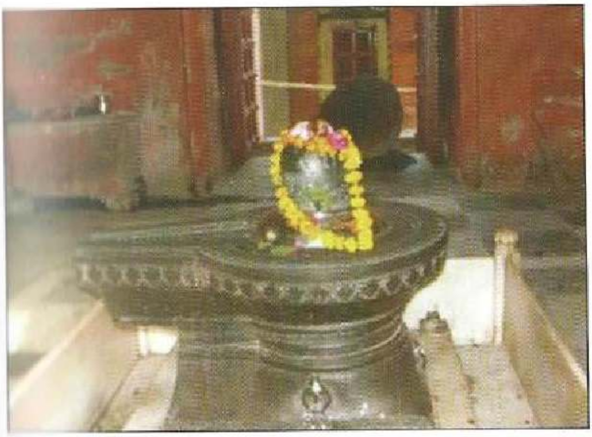

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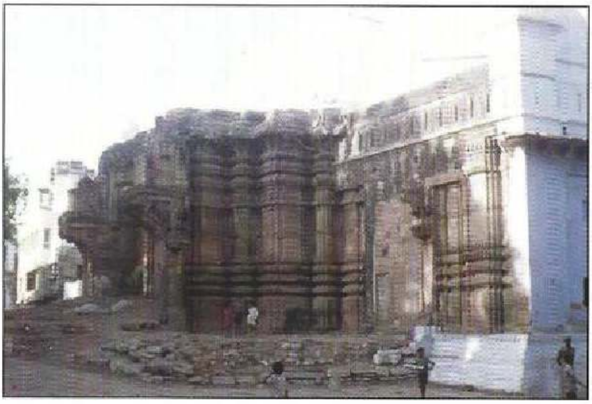

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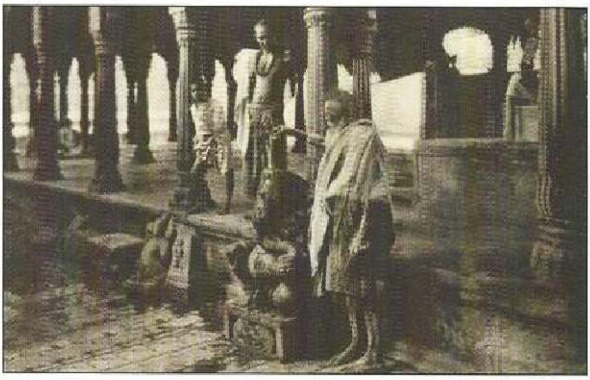

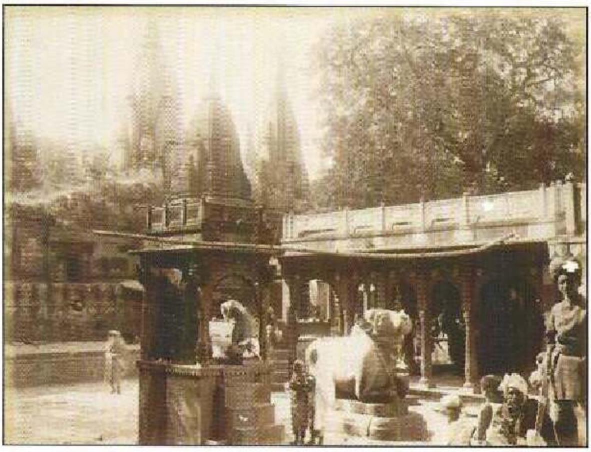

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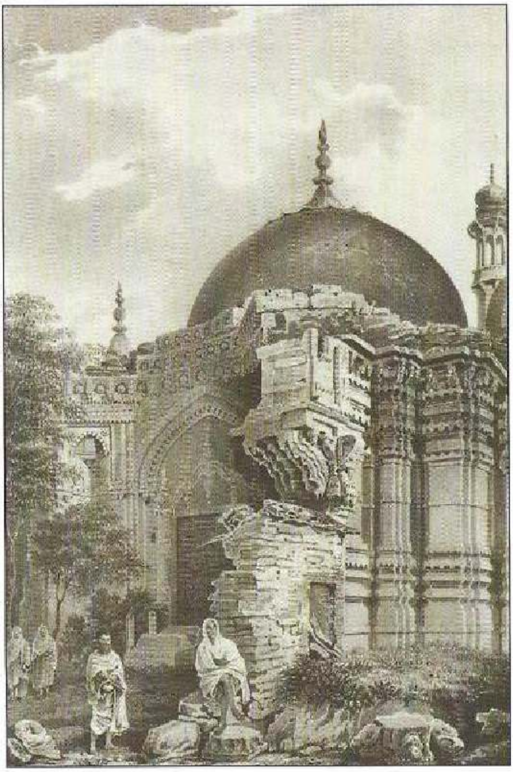
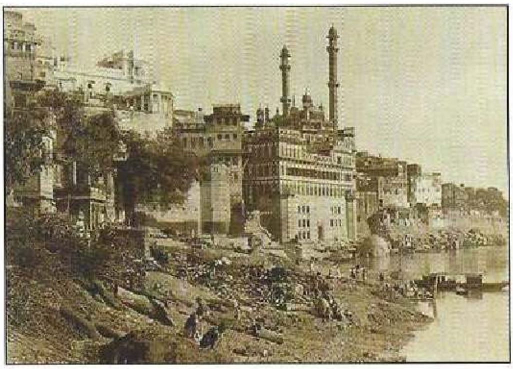
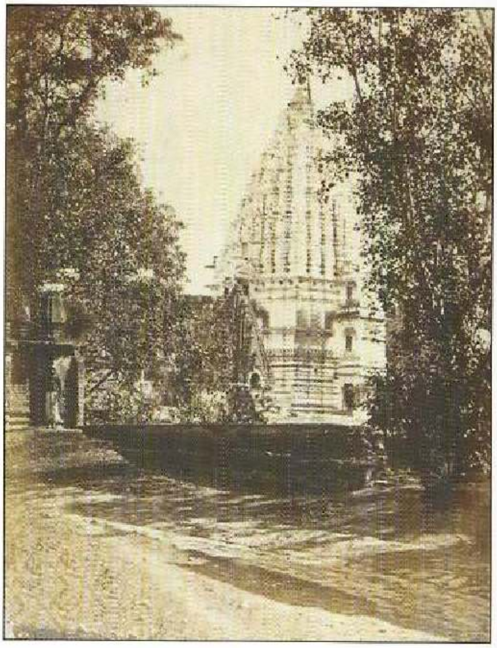


24. A sketch of the Gyanvapi mosque/Vishwanath temple by James Prinsep in 1831. There was a clash between Hindus and Muslims in 1809 when Hindus tried to construct a small shrine on the narrow strip of land between the mosque and the temple. They seem to have succeeded, as this sketch shows a platform on the contested ground (Eck 2015: 128).



25. Photograph of the Dharahara mosque built by Aurangzeb in place of the Bindu Madhava temple, by Samuel Bourne in 1866.

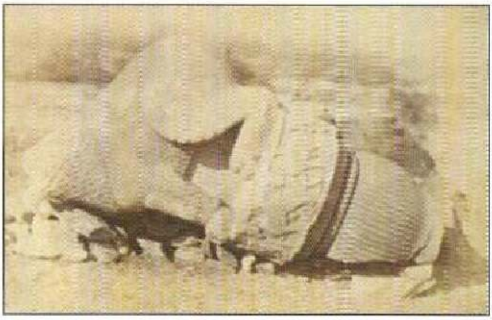
26. Krishna lifting Govardhan *parvat*. The statue was found at Bakariya Kund, which was converted into a Muslim site.



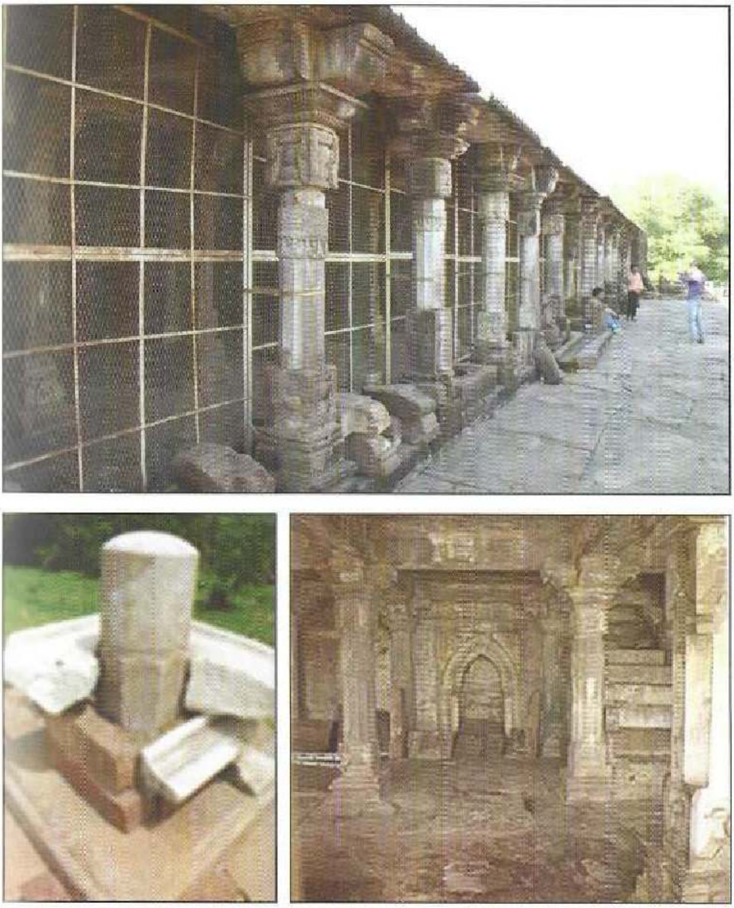
27. Mahakaleshwar temple, Ujjain; photograph taken in 1869.

28. Sanskrit inscription at the Lakshman temple, Khajuraho.

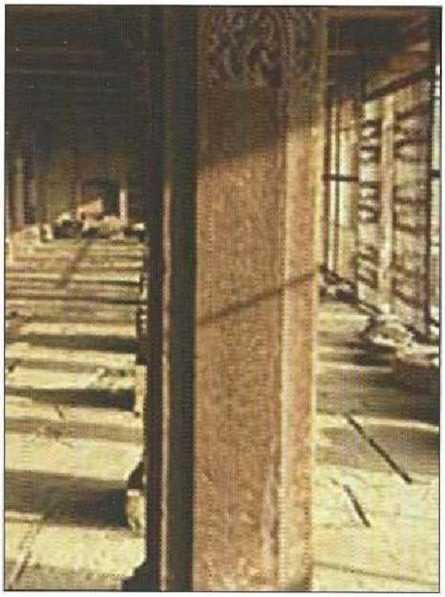
29. Image of Vishnu Vaikuntha at the Lakshman temple at Khajuraho.



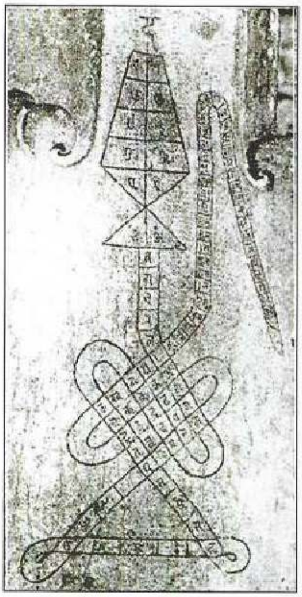
30. Lion capital of the fallen pillar at Udayagiri, photograph by Joseph Beglar in 1875, courtesy British Library.



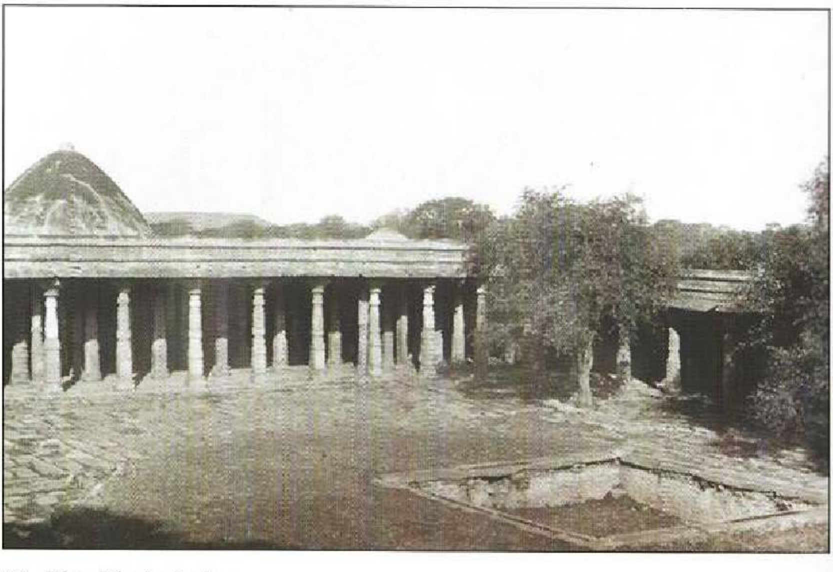
31. The Bijamandal mandir/mosque.



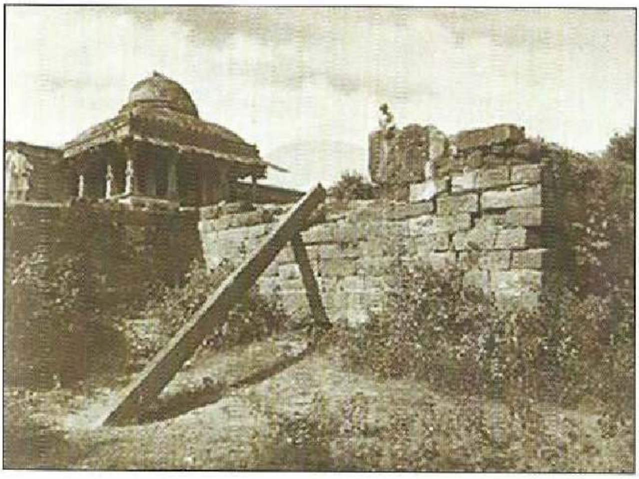
32. Pillar in the Bijamandal mandir/ mosque with an inscription of Naravarman.



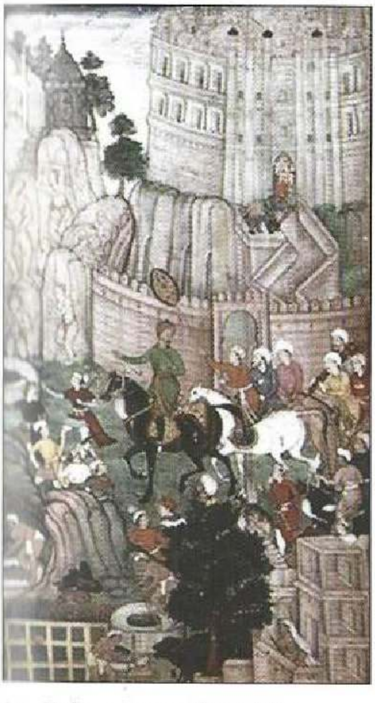
34. Inscriptions in Sanskrit and Prakrit on the floor of the Kamal Maula mosque found by K.K. Lele in 1903.



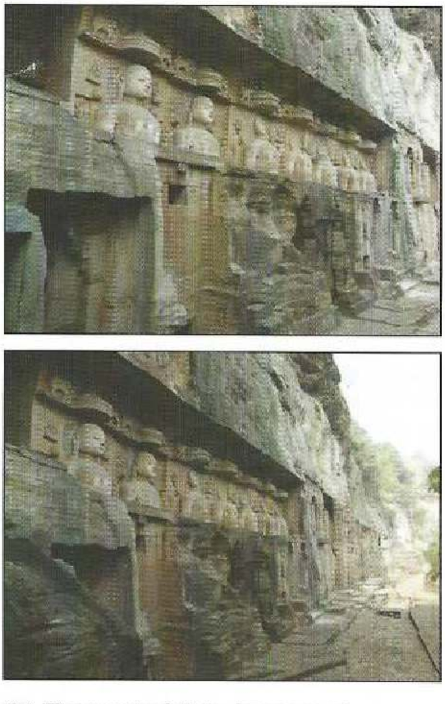
33. The Bhojashala.



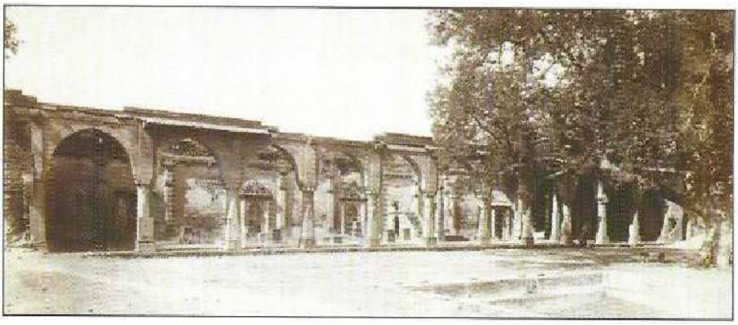
35. A photograph taken in 1912 shows the longest piece of the Dhar Iron Pillar lying in a sloping position in front of the Lat Masjid.



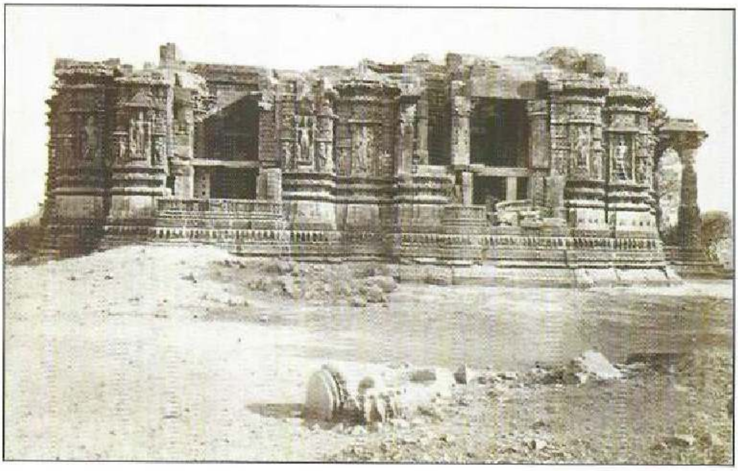
36. Babur inspecting Jain images at Gwalior Fort, Mughal miniature painting.



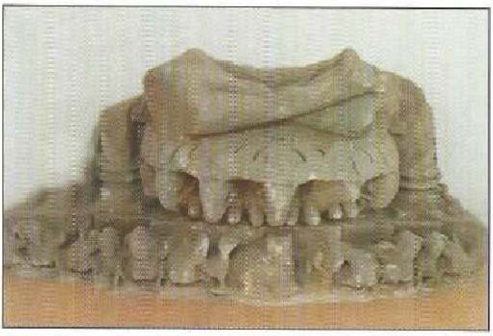
37. Desecrated Jain images at Gwalior Fort.



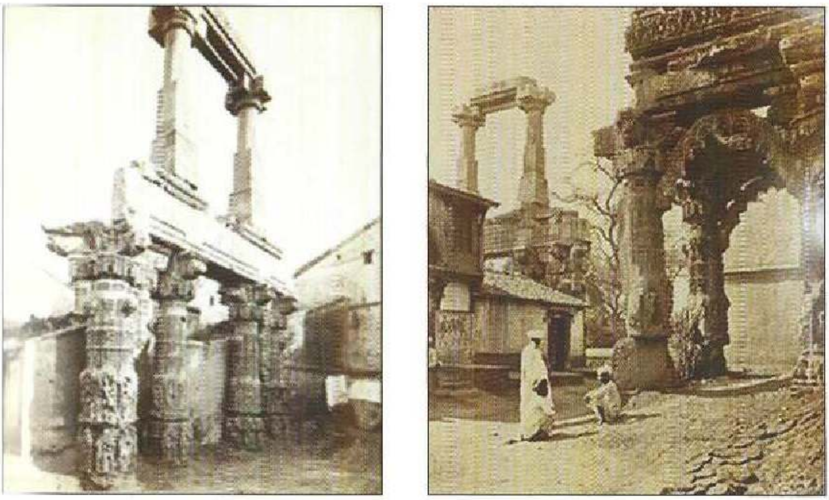
38. Partly ruined facade of Shaikh Jodh's mosque at Paṭan (Gujarat), with pillars from Hindu temples; photograph by Henry Cousens in the 1880s.



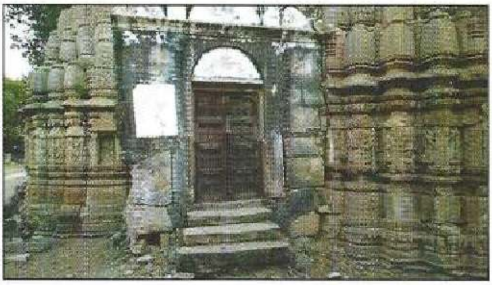
39. A photograph of Sun Temple at Modhera by D.H. Skyes around 1869.



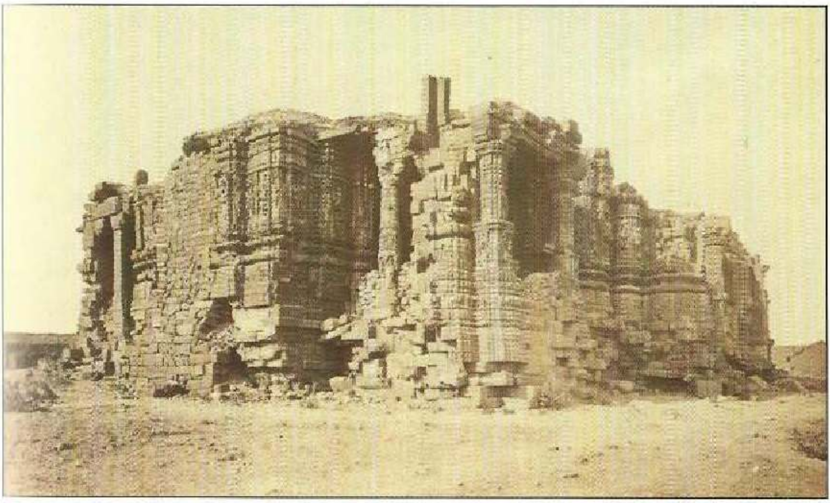
40. Mutilated image of the Sun god at Modhera site museum.



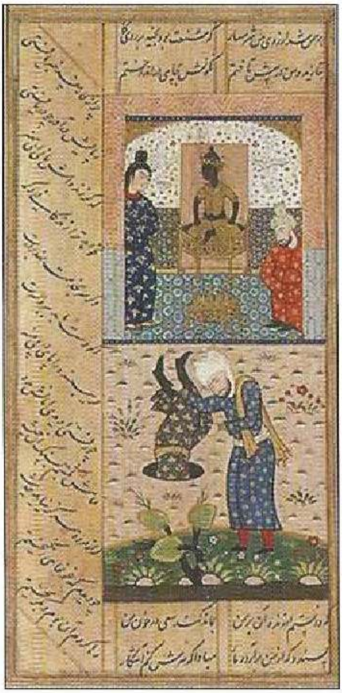
41. Ruins of the main portal of the Rudramahalaya temple, Gujarat, 1874.



42. The Rudramahalaya turned into a mosque.

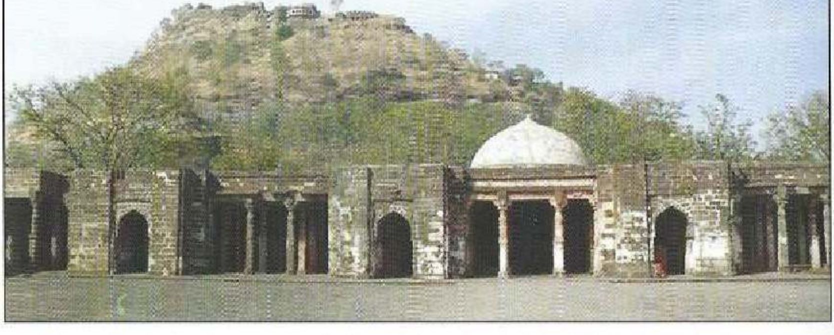


43. Somnath temple converted into a mosque.

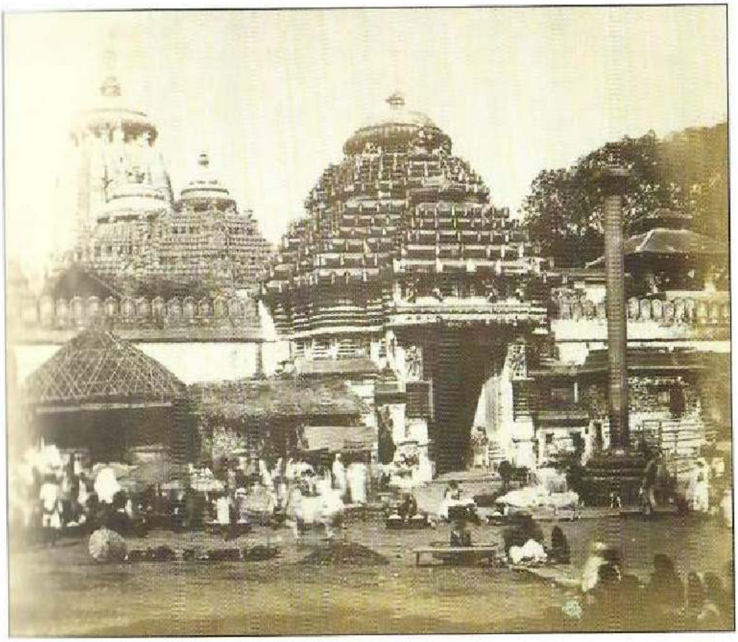


44. Sadi throwing a priest from Somnath down a well, from a manuscript of the Bustan, circa 1585.

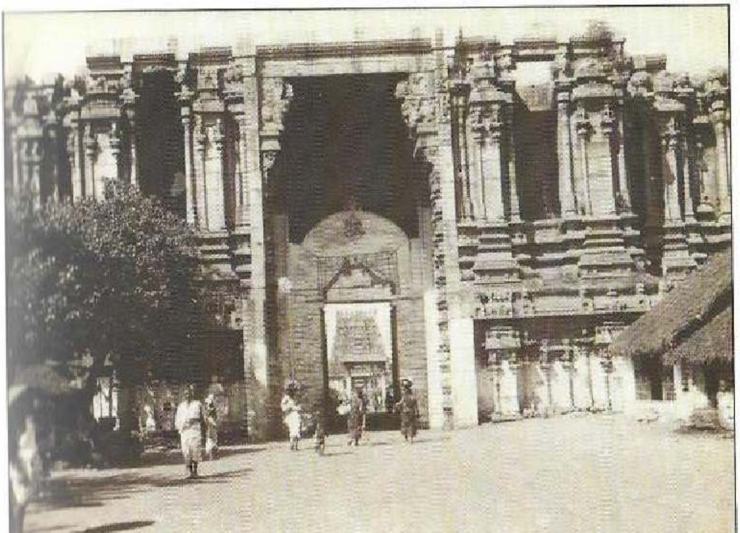
45. Naganatha temple, where the deity was placed under the *garbhagriha* as a precautionary measure.



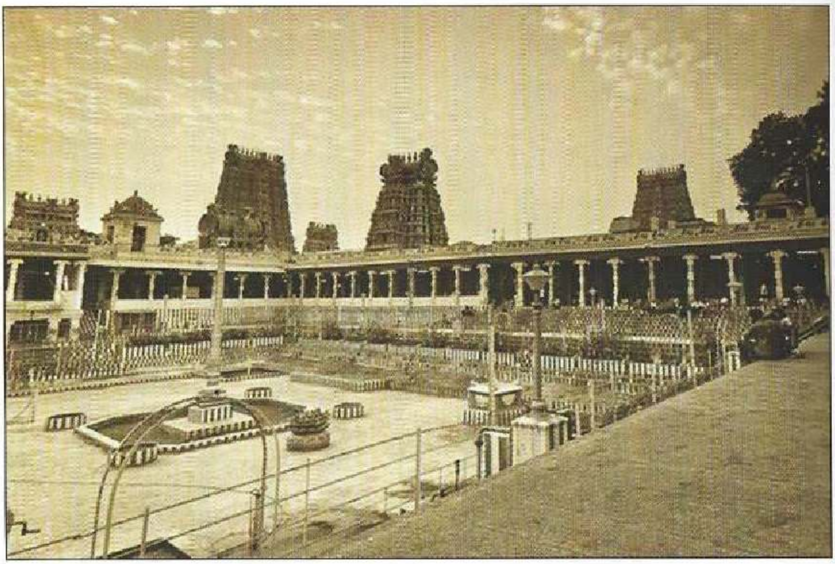
46. Façade of Jami mosque (Bharat Mata mandir), Daulatabad.



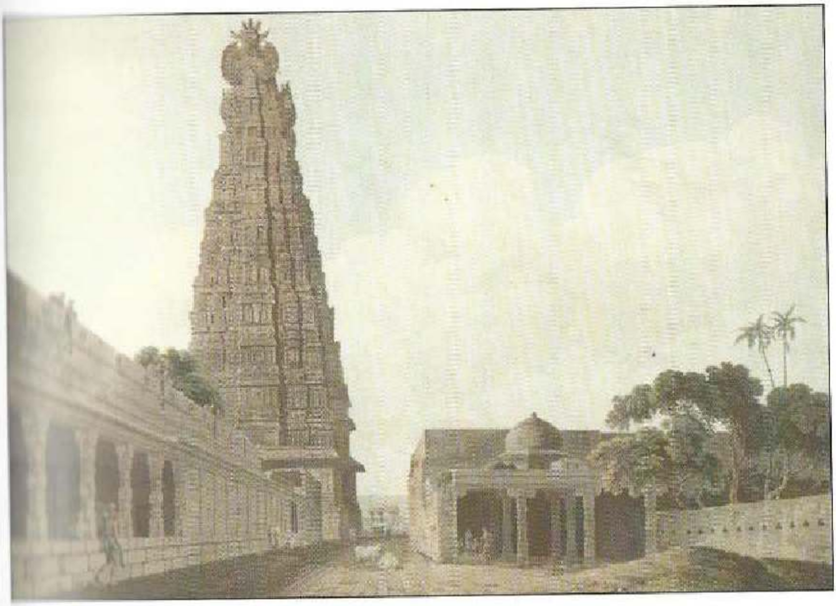
47. Entrance to the Jagannath temple, photograph by Henry Dixon in the early 1860s.



48. A photograph of the Sriranganatha temple by an unknown photographer in the 1880s.



49. Minakshi temple, Madurai.



50. The Nataraja temple, Chidambaram. Sketch by F. Swain Ward, British Museum.

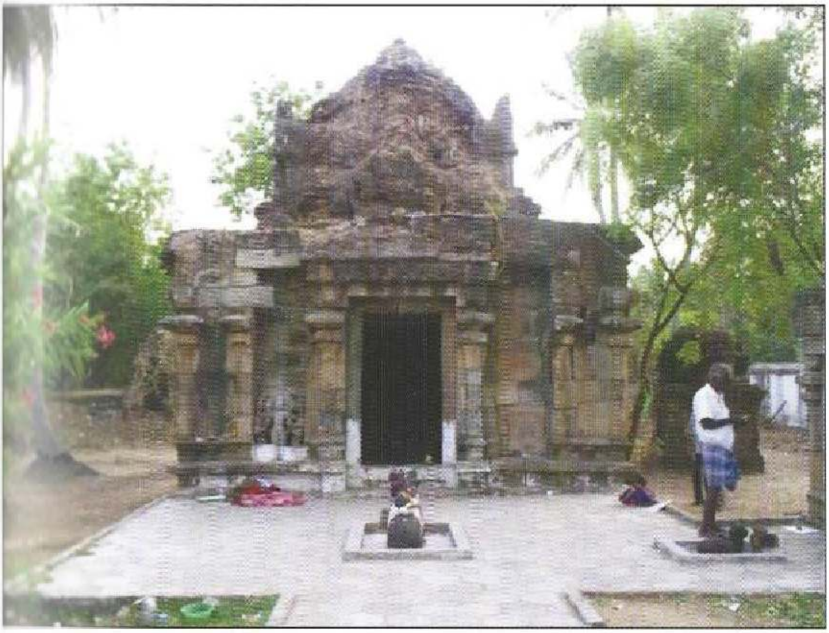
51. Colonel Alexander Greenlaw, a British officer and photographer, who took the first photographs of Hampi in 1856.

52. The Krishna temple, Hampi, photographed by Colonel Alexander Greenlaw.

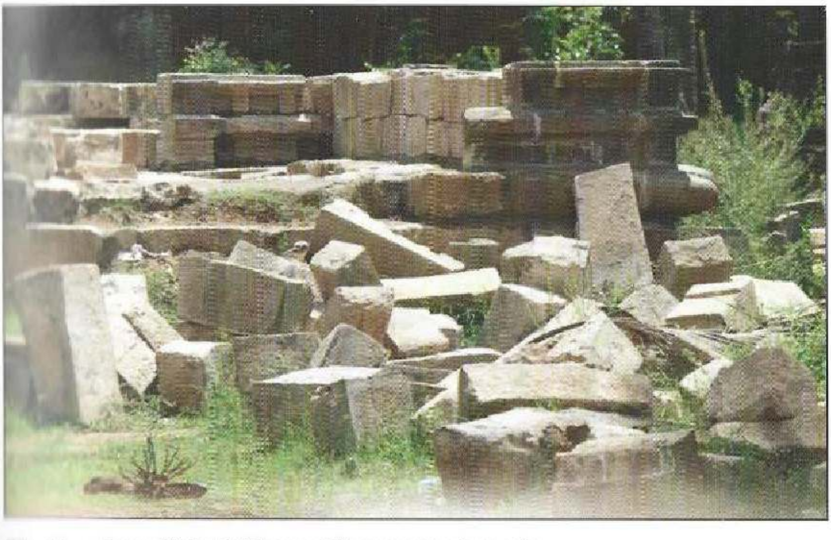
53. Image of Balkrishna instated in the Krishna temple by Krishnadeva Raya, now in State Museum, Chennai.

55. The temple at Tirupati.

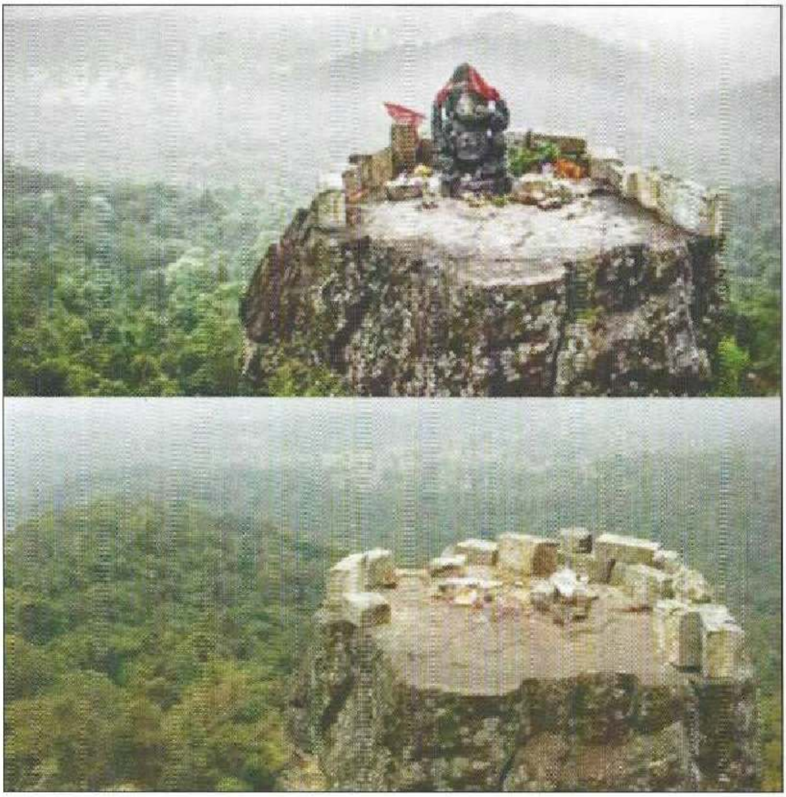
54. Ruins of Vijayanagara; photograph by Edmund David Lyon in 1868.



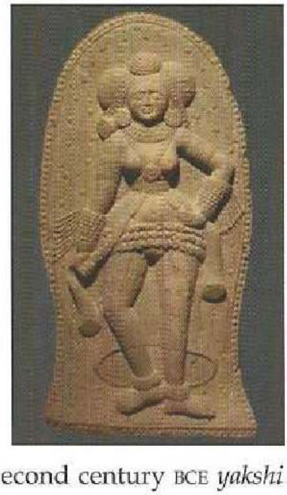
56. The Naganathaswamy Chola temple (Thanjavur) before its demolition.



57. The demolished Naganathaswamy temple.



58. A thousand year-old Ganesh statue intentionally thrown from a mountain top in Bastar.



59. A second century BCE *yakshi* stolen from Chandraketugarh, Bengal.

In Rajashekharasuri's *Prabandhakosa* (1349 CE), Goddess Amba cautioned a devotee that in bad times when "so many are outside the Faith," a costly image on display "would only bring harm to the Faith by inviting their attacks on the temple." A stone image was more suitable for the times (Granoff 1991: 201-202).

The *Vimanarcanakalpa*, a medieval priestly handbook of the Vaishnava Vaikhanasa School, recommended interment of images in times of danger. Laying down ritual procedures for such acts, it stated that after preparing the burial pit and worshipping Earth Goddess, the priest was to enter the sanctum sanctorum and request God, "As long as there is danger, O Visnu, please lie down in a bed with the goddess Earth." He was to then transfer the divine energy (*shakti*) located in the image to either the fixed image, or to a *kurca*, a bundle of fifty stalks of sacrificial grass, which was thenceforth to be worshipped in place of the image, as it was less likely to incite iconoclasts (Davis 2015: 127-128).

Besides burial, various other tactics were devised to shield images. The threat never fully abated. In 1702-03, the 84 year-old Emperor Aurangzeb asked for information on the situation in Somnath, where early in his reign the temple had been demolished and worship discontinued. He ordered that if Hindus were found to have revived worship, the temple should be destroyed in such a manner that no trace of it remained (*Mirat-i-Ahmadi* 1965: 341).[2]

THE FATE OF MOSQUES

If temples were symbols of royal authority, that reasoning apparently did not apply to mosques. It would be hard to recall a mosque built by a Muslim ruler vandalized by a successor Muslim sovereign. In Multan, in 1006 CE Mahmud Ghaznavi restored the Umayyad masjid built by Muhammad bin Qasim in 712 as the place of Friday prayers. He did not demolish the Shia mosque erected in the tenth century, just left it to decay.

Sultan Ahmad Shah of Gujarat did not touch mosques at Bharuch, Khambhat, and Dholka, built by the previous Tughlaq dynasty. Instead, in 1414 CE he chose to demolish the Rudramahalaya temple built by Jayasimha Siddharaja in 1140, some three centuries earlier.

The shrine of Muin al-din Chishti at Ajmer was visited by several rival Muslim rulers, beginning with Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Even Nadir Shah planned a visit (Currie 1989: 97-116). No one contemplated harming its sacred precincts. Babur, on winning Delhi from the Lodis in 1526, instantly extended patronage to Chishti institutions in the city. The pattern was replicated when the Mughals expanded into provinces formerly ruled by Indo-Muslim dynasties.

HINDU ICONOCLASM?

The claims of some scholars notwithstanding, a Hindu theology of iconoclasm would be difficult to substantiate. To counterpose Islamic jubilation at the "bravado of iconoclasm" with instances of Hindu desecration was dubious, at the very least (Ahmad 2003: 38). Instances of appropriation of images by Hindu kings in times of conflict reiterated the contrast with Islamic iconoclasm. Almost without exception, Hindu rulers honoured the images they acquired, thereby reaffirming a shared sense of sacred. In the Islamic case, seizure of an image entailed its very dismemberment.

KALINGA JINA

The earliest case known so far of image appropriation in the Indian subcontinent dated to the 2nd-1st century BCE. A Nanda king of Magadha was alleged to have carried away an image of Kalinga Jina (a Jain Tirthankara), from Kalinga. Subsequently, king Kharvela of the Mahameghavahana dynasty attacked Magadha and retrieved the *pratima*. He recorded the deed in the famous Hathigumpha inscription (Pl. 1); incised on the roof of an artificial cave, on the southern face of

Udayagiri hills, near Bhubaneswar[3] (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XX: 71-89).

The inscription was first noticed by A. Stirling in 1825, and published by James Prinsep from an eye-copy prepared by Lieutenant Kittoe in 1837. Subsequently, Alexander Cunningham published a tracing in the first volume of *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*. Another version was prepared by Rajendralal Mitra in 1880. Thereafter, many leading epigraphists examined the inscription. In 1965, D.C. Sircar prepared what remains the critical edition of the inscription. Line 12 of the inscription stated that king Kharvela,

> ... causing panic amongst the people of Magadha (he) drives (his) elephants into the Sugamgiya (Palace), and (he) makes the King of Magadha, Bahasatimita, bow at his feet... the Jina of Kalinga' which had been taken away by King Nanda (was) brought home ... (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XX: 88).

The 'Jina of Kalinga' was probably a reference to Tirthankara Sitalanatha, who was born at Bhadalapura (Bhadrapura or Bhadrachalam) in the Godavari district. Sugamgiya Palace was mentioned in Vishakhadatta's Sanskrit play, *Mudrarakshasa* (Act III) as the residence of Chandragupta Maurya (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XX: 85-88). The inscription was evidence that a Jina image existed in the time of the Nandas, i.e. in the fourth century BCE (Cort 2010: 45-46).

VATAPI GANESH

Another recorded instance of arrogation of an image related to the Pallava king, Narsimhavarman (r. 630-668), who defeated the Chalukya ruler, Pulakesin II (r. 610-642) in the battle of Vatapi, in 642 CE. His general, Paranjothi brought back from Vatapi an image of Ganesh, which he took to his birthplace Tiruchenkattankudi, near Thanjavur, and worshipped as Vatapi Ganesh (Dikshit 1980: 94-100). Subsequently, Muthuswami Dikshitar (1775-1835), of the musical trinity that included besides him, Tyagaraja (1767-1847), and Shyama Shastri (1762-1827), composed the *Vatapi Ganapatim* in Sanskrit in honour of the image. It remains instated in a shrine in the Uthirapasupatheeswarar temple complex, and prayers continue to be offered to it (Ayyar 1982: 402-404).

Buddha Image from Magadha

Lalitaditya Muktapida (r. 724-760 CE), the most powerful ruler of the Karkota dynasty of Kashmir, had a minister, Cankuna who came from Tukharistan and was likely a Turk. A stupa was credited to him at Parihasapura, as well as the foundation of two stupas with gold statues and a *caitya*, one of which was seen by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Wu-kung sometime between 759 and 763 CE (Wink 1997: 74). As recompense for his services, Cankuna asked the king for an image of the Buddha transported from Magadha,

> Favour your humble servant by giving him that image of Sugata (Buddha), which was brought on the shoulders of an elephant from Magadha (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 147).

His request was accepted and the icon gifted to him. Cankuna placed it in his vihara, where Kalhana, the twelfth century author of the *Rajatarangini*, could see it several centuries later,

> ... the image of the Blessed [Buddha], which [still] shines in its brownish (bronze) beauty as if clothed in the brownish-red garment [of the mendicants] (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 147).

Naga Kaliya

The Bilhari inscription (at the Chandrehe temple near Rewa) of the Kalachuri king, Lakshmanaraja II (r. 945-970 CE) recorded his invasion of Orissa, and defeat of the Kosala ruler. He obtained from the Prince of Odra an image of Naga Kaliya, worked with jewels and gold (*Memoirs of the ASI* 1931: 12).

Lakshmanaraja II gifted that image to Shiva in the Somnath temple in Gujarat, where he had earlier dedicated a car (*ratha*) (*Madhya Pradesh District Gazetteers – Shahdol* 1994: 40).

VAIKUNTHA VISHNU

The Chandella ruler, Yasovarman (r. 925-950 CE) constructed the Lakshmana (Vaikuntha) temple at Khajuraho for a revered image of Vaikuntha Vishnu he had obtained from the Pratihara ruler, Devapala. Verse 43 of a Sanskrit inscription found amidst the ruins of the temple, stated that Yasovarman had received the image from Devapala, son of Herambapala, and he placed it in the temple he constructed. Herambapala himself had acquired the image from Sahi, the king of Kira, who in turn got it from the lord of Bhota, who had found it in Kailash (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. I: 124). The journey of the image was testimony to a shared sense of sacredness among various sovereigns.

INJUNCTIONS ON IMAGE APPROPRIATION

While discussing image appropriation, a verse in the *Purva Karana Agama* bears recalling. It stated that whenever a king planned to invade the territory of a rival, he had to ensure that the women, children, aged, and sick were relocated to safe places and sheltered from the ravages of war.

Further, it was essential for a triumphant king to bring deities from the vanquished kingdom, and arrange for their worship. Such an act would serve a dual purpose – it would divest the defeated ruler of divine protection, and additionally ensure that the *pratimas* remained under veneration. An interesting supplement was that it was obligatory for an overpowered king to exert himself and retrieve the images within a span of three years (*Purva Karana Agama* 2003: 875-876; Nagaswamy 2011a: 41).

IMAGES TAKEN BY CHOLA RULERS

Chola emperors brought back several images from the lands they conquered. A Pala image of Ganesh, worshipped at the Nageswara temple at Kumbakonam, could have been acquired by Rajendra Chola (r. 1014-1044) during his expedition to Bengal. Two Ganesh bronzes, one from Muthupet (Thanjavur) and the other from Thiruvanaikka (near Trichy), resembled the Pala Ganesh, but were cast in Tamil Nadu (Nagaswamy 2011a: 41-42).

Rajadhiraja Chola I (also known as Vijaya Rajendra Chola; r. 1044-1052), brought back the statue of a Dwarapala from the kingdom of the Western Chalukyas (with whom the Cholas were frequently at war for control of the fertile Vengi region). An inscription on the pedestal stated that the Dwarapala was brought by Shri Vijaya Rajendra Chola after burning down Kalyanapura (capital of the Western Chalukyas). The image was later kept in the temple of Darasuram, the new capital built by Rajaraja II (r. 1150-1173), and is currently in the Tanjore Art Gallery.

A Pala Nataraja from Bengal in the Melakadambur temple, built in the time of Kulotunga I (r. 1070-1122 CE), may not have been taken in war. Kulottunga's *rajaguru* hailed from the Bengal region, and could have brought the image for his personal worship (Nagaswamy 2011a: 41-42).

CHALUKYA AND KALINGA *PRATIMAS* AT GANGAIKONDACHOLAPURAM

Several Chalukya and Kalinga icons were found in the Gangaikondacholapuram temple complex built by Rajendra Chola I. The most outstanding Chalukya image was a *Suryapitha*, now worshipped as Navagraha in the temple. A sizable number of images brought from the Chalukya region were of Durga, indicating that the goddess as the deity of victory was a singular object of acquisition. Among other

Chalukya images was a Ganesh, now called Kanakkupillaiyar, in a shrine south-west of the Gangaikondacholapuram temple. An icon of Durga was enshrined in a temple in Veerareddi Street (Nagaswamy 1970: 59; Nagaswamy 2011a: 41-42).

The Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology found three beautiful images of Kalinga origin in a mound called Kilaichengamedu, a mile east of the Gangaikondacholapuram temple. Near the temple was Meykavalputtur village, the ancient hamlet of body-guards. A Durga image (actually a Kali *murti* over seven feet tall), believed to have guarded the eastern gate of the Palace, was discovered there. Another Kali icon depicted the eight-armed Devi seated on a pedestal, holding various weapons. Nearby were three Kalinga sculptures, two representing Shiva as Bhairava, and the third depicting Bhairavi. All were carved in the red sandstone found at Bhubaneshwar and Konark, and were excellent specimens of Kalinga art (Nagaswamy 1970: 59-60).

Rajendra Chola's generals, who returned from their march to the Ganges through Kalinga, could have brought these sculptures (of the ninth century) and erected a temple in the capital (Nagaswamy 1970: 60-61). The three sculptures indicated the impact of the Shakta cult on the Cholas. That was confirmed by two Tamil literary works, *Kalingattuparani* and *Takkayagaaparani*, which were linked to the Shakta tradition (Nagaswamy 2011a: 41-42).

MAHAVIRA *MURTI* RETRIEVED AND WORSHIPPED

Jinaprabhasuri wrote of an image of Mahavira that had been commissioned by a lay devotee, Manadeva, in the city of Kannanaya, in the kingdom of the Cholas. It was consecrated in Vikrama 1233, and worshipped till vs 1248. That year Prithviraj Chauhan was defeated by Muhammad Ghori, and a Jain lay follower, the merchant Ramadeva, sent a message to his community, "The Muslims have taken over the kingdom.

You must keep the image of Mahavira in hiding." The image was concealed in a heap of sand in a village. Subsequently, it was taken to Delhi and kept in the treasure house of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, in Tughlaqabad. The guards waited for the Sultan to return from Devagiri to instruct them on what to do with it. Jinaprabhasuri, who wrote in the third person, described the incident,

> He (the Sultan) had it brought from the treasure house at Tugulakabad. In front of the entire assemblage of his courtiers he had the image brought before him, borne there quickly on the shoulders of his equestrian nobles, and after he had a good look at it he handed it over to the monk Jinaprabhasuri. With great rejoicing and much fanfare the image was welcomed into the community and all the faithful then together placed the image in a temple known as the Malikatajdin Sarai. The master Jinaprabhasuri performed the ritual of sprinkling powder over the image after reciting some sacred words to consecrate the powder. The image was worshipped with much ceremony.... (Shinohara and Granoff 2006: 4-6).

Jinaprabhasuri recorded his contribution to the preservation of his faith in the troubled times,

> And everywhere his army had conquered, the Muslim Lord, pleased with Jinaprabhasuri, the ornament of the Kharatara lineage of monks, by an edict ensured the safety of Jain holy sites, like the Glorious Satrunjaya, Girinar and Phalavardhi.... What more need I say, for everyone can see how the Lord of Men, the Muslim ruler, won over by the excellent qualities of the master Jinaprabhasuri, performs so many services for the Jain faith.
>
> Every morning as the sun rises the auspicious sounds of conch shells reverberate from the many Jain temples...And just as monks did when the Hindus ruled, and the times were not so evil, Jinaprabhasuri roams freely, spreading the Jain faith... (Shinohara and Granoff 2006: 17).

BALAKRISHNA AT VIJAYANAGARA

Krishnadeva Raya, the greatest of Vijayanagara kings, acquired a stone image of Balakrishna from a temple in Orissa after his victory over the Gajapati ruler, Prataparudra. He instated the image in the Krishna temple he constructed at Hampi, in 1515 CE (*South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. IV, Nos. 254-255: 44-50).

APPROPRIATED ICONS VENERATED, NOT VIOLATED

None of the instances mentioned above entailed desecration of a temple or image. If images were brought as trophies of war, as some have alleged, they remained objects of reverence. Indeed, in several cases they continue to be worshiped till today.

HINDU ICONOCLASTS?

Some instances of Hindu defilement of Buddhist and Jain places of worship have been cited, but the evidence was "too vague to be convincing" (Wink Vol. II 1997: 308-310).

Foremost among Hindu rulers described as iconoclasts was Shashank, who became king of Gauda sometime before 606 CE, with his capital at Karnasuvarna (present day Murshidabad). The story of his persecution of Buddhists was mentioned in a twelfth century text, *Arya-manjusri-mulakalpa* which repeated the statements of Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tsang. R.C. Majumdar regarded it "extremely unsafe" to accept statements made in that work as historical (Majumdar 1943: 64).

While travelling in Magadh in 637-38 CE, Hiuen Tsang reported that Shashank had cut down the Bodhi tree in Gaya where Buddha had attained enlightenment, and also ordered the removal of a Buddha image in a neighbouring temple. According to Hiuen Tsang, when the king learnt that his order on the Bodhi tree had been implemented, he was "seized with terror; his body produced sores; and his flesh rotted off, and after a short while he died" (Beal Book II 1884: 122).

The accounts of Buddhist writers could by no means "be regarded unbiased or unprejudiced," at least as far as Shashank was concerned. For Shashank had been engaged in a prolonged power struggle with Harsha of Kanauj (r. 606-647), a patron of Buddhism. The hostility of Hiuen Tsang and Banabhatta, noted Sanskrit poet at Harsha's court, gave Shashank a bad name. According to Majumdar, such religious intolerance was rare in ancient India. He regarded Shashank as "a great king and a remarkable personality during the first half of the seventh century A.D." (Majumdar 1943: 67).

The Bodhi tree was said to have been restored a few months later by Purnavarman, king of Magadha (Sinha 1977: 147). In the course of one night it was said to have grown to a height of over three metres, which was clearly an anomalous situation (Wink 1997: 310).

Also on the list of Hindu vandals was king Sankara Varman (r. 883-902 CE) of Kashmir (son of the great Avantivarman of the Utpala dynasty). He never desecrated a temple or image, confining himself to temple lands and treasures. As the *Rajatarangini* stated,

> This robber of what temples possessed in villages and other (property), established two new (revenue) offices....He took from the temples the profits arising from the sale of incense, sandal-wood, and other (articles of worship), under the pretext that they were the (king's legal) share of the selling price. Then, again, he plundered straightway sixty-four temples, through special officers (placed over them) under the pretext of (exercising) supervision. The king resumed the villages which belonged to the temples, against a compensatory assignment (*pratihara*), and (then) cultivated the land himself as (if he were) an agriculturist (*Rajatarangini* Vol. 1: 206).

Sankara Varman was credited with the construction of the Samkaragaurisa and Sugandhesa Shiva temples, and the appointment of a Brahmin well-versed in the four Vedas, as their custodian (Chaku and Chaku 2016: 86).

Another king of Kashmir, Harsa (r. 1089-1111) of the Lohara dynasty, certainly defiled images. The *Rajatarangini* was unequivocal, "There was not one temple in a village, town or in the city which was not despoiled of its images by that Turuska, King Harsa" (*Rajatarangini* Vol. 1: 353).

The colossal image of Buddha in the Rajavihara at Parihasapura (built by king Lalitaditya), was among the few that escaped being melted down by Harsa. However, the Rajavihara itself was burnt down in the war between Harsa and his cousin, Uccala (of the second Lohara dynasty; 1101-1111). The silver image of Vishnu Parahasakesava was carried away and broken by Harsa. A new statue was instated by Uccala, when he ascended the throne (*Rajatarangini* Vol. II: 302).

Kalhana, while narrating the exploits of Harsa, bestowed on him the title "*Turuska*," i.e. Muhammadan, and made a reference to *Turuska* captains employed in his army and enjoying his favour. Was he "instigated or encouraged somehow by the steady advance of Muhammadanism in the neighbouring territories?" (Stein "Introduction" in *Rajatarangini* Vol. 1: 113). Kashmiri poetess, Lalla who condemned image worship, also appeared to have been influenced by Islamic ideas on iconoclasm (Wink 1997: 311).

A RARE OCCURRENCE

The *Rajatarangini* recorded a rare instance of wanton destruction of an image by a Hindu king. Lalitaditya once promised safe passage to the ruler of Gauda (Bengal); but killed him at *Trigrami*, "though he had made the glorious [image of Visnu] *Parihasakesava* a surety [for his guest's safety]" (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 152). The Gauda king's servants came to Kashmir on the pretext of visiting the shrine of Sharda, to avenge the murder of their leader. They resolved to attack the image of *Parihasakesava*, which had been made a surety and was the favourite object of Lalitaditya's devotion. Seeing them eager to enter while Lalitaditya was away, the attendant priests closed the gates of the temple of Vishnu *Parihasakesava*.

After a forceful offensive, the Gaudas reached the silver statue of Vishnu *Ramasvamin*, and mistaking it for that of *Parihasakesava*, broke it to dust (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 152-153). (Lalitaditya had noticed the silver image of Vishnu *Ramasvamin* in a remote part of Kashmir some years earlier, and built a small shrine for it near the temple of Vishnu *Parihasakesava*). The Gauda troops scattered the particles in all directions, "while they were all being cut up by the soldiers who had come from the city [Srinagara]" (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 153). Kalhana wrote of the long journey they had undertaken, and their devotion to their dead sovereign,

> Even the creator cannot achieve what the *Gaudas* did on that occasion. To this day even the temple of *Ramasvamin* is seen empty, whereas the whole world is filled with the fame of the *Gauda* heroes (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 153).

CASE OF MUSLIM INVADERS AND RULERS

In an overwhelming number of cases of image appropriation, victorious Hindu kings instated them in grand temples. Muslim rulers destroyed entire temples, and where that was not feasible, disfigured the images.[4] The evidence was strewn all over the subcontinent. Alberuni wrote of some images that Mahmud Ghaznavi seized,

> The city of Taneshar is highly venerated by the Hindus. The idol of that place is called *Cakrasvamin, i.e.* the owner of the *cakra*, a weapon which we have already described. It is of bronze, and is nearly the size of a man. It is now lying in the hippodrome in Ghazna, together with the *Lord of Somanath*, which is a representation of the ... *Linga* [of Mahadeva]... (Alberuni 1910: 117).

Excavations at Ghazni confirmed that images were taken to Ghazni "for recontextualization and display" (Flood 2009:

32). Among the findings was an image of a Tirthankara. The Italian Archaeological Mission, during excavations in Ghazni in 1957-58, at a site referred to as the "Palace," found a statue of Brahma, 0.98 metres high, broken in eight pieces, which could be joined together, with the torso missing (Pl. 2). Umberto Scerrato, who wrote a summary report of the excavations, described the find as, "... an un-hoped for and stimulating evidence of the trophies brought along to Ghazni from India, following the triumphs of the Ghaznavids."

He quoted medieval historians to buttress his hypothesis. Utbi had recorded that Mahmud Ghaznavi used gold from images he brought from Somnath to build the Arusu 'l-Falak mosque. Sibli noted that Mahmud transported a veritable museum from India. Ferishta stated that Mahmud had the Somnath statue broken into pieces, which he used in the threshold of the Arusu 'l-Falak mosque (Scerrato 1959: 29, 39).

Scerrato noted that the face of the Brahma statue had been "completely wiped out, destroyed, it would seem, not by iconoclastic fury but slowly worn away by passing feet, its appearance being much like medieval tombal stones in church pavements" (Scerrato 1959: 39-40). It would be hard to mention instances of *murtis* subjected to such fate by victorious Hindu rulers.

THE MEDIEVAL RESPONSE

This work examines the medieval response to temple destruction and image desecration.[5] While temples were destroyed on a considerable scale, also noteworthy were the repeated endeavours to reconstruct them.[6] In each instance of rebirth, the temple retained its original name, even though there was a visible downsizing in its scale and grandeur. The Keshava temple at Mathura, the Vishwanath temple at Kashi, the Somnath temple in Saurashtra, the Rama *mandir* at Ayodhya were among the shrines continually restored, well after

Hindus had lost all semblance of political power. The Bindu Madhava, the most important Vishnu temple in Varanasi, was demolished in 1669 and a mosque constructed in its place. The temple now bearing the name Bindu Madhava is a modest structure in the shadow of the mosque, but continues the traditions associated with the site.

In multiple cases, the reconstructed shrines had unknown patrons, pointing to the feebleness of the theory that restricted temples to an alliance of king and deity. Intriguingly, mosques built on temple sites often retained the sacred names – Bijamandal mosque, Lat masjid, Atala masjid, Gyanvapi mosque, and not to forget, *masjid-i-janamsthan*.[7]

Equally worthy of study was the fate of images enshrined in temples. Many were swiftly removed by anxious devotees, many more were hurriedly buried; some remained on the move for decades, till such time they could be escorted back to their abodes. In several cases, images were damaged in flight. Countless images were lost, as their places of burial were forgotten over time. That necessitated the consecration of new images in more peaceable circumstances. So there were temples of the tenth-eleventh centuries, which housed images instated in the sixteenth. In situations where neither temple nor image could be safeguarded, the memory endured, and a shrine was recreated after an interval of several centuries.

Truly innovative, in the face of Muslim political presence and decline of large-scale temples, was the recourse to *kirtan, bhajan, katha, lila,* which did away with the need for images, while indicating the resilience of faith. In the case of *lilas,* the human being substituted for the image. *Lilas* (dramas) in their present form are said to have originated in the Banaras region, during or shortly after the lifetime of Tulsidas. Their performance from the outset was linked to the *Ramcharitmanas* (Hein 1972: 105-25, 223-71).

Lilas were associated with the philosophy of the Bhakti movement, which embraced all sections of society, and thus displayed "positive strengths of their own." *Ramlila* enacted on open grounds, expressed notions of cosmography and pilgrimage that aimed "at reclaiming and transforming the mundane world" (Lutgendorf 1994: 254-255).

The decentralized nature of Hinduism also ensured that devotees could worship their deities at home when temples were under siege. A Mughal miniature painting portrayed a peasant girl cupping a brazier in her hand, appearing to revere the fire (Pl. 3).

This is clearly not a comprehensive survey of the fate of every temple and image in every region in the medieval era. A few illustrative examples have been presented to bring to the fore this less deliberated dimension of Indian history. What was notable was that most acts of desecration were the handiwork of invaders, sultans, or emperors. There was not much evidence of involvement beyond political circles. Deities in flight were shielded by countless ordinary devotees, while royal personages of varying stature participated in their reinstatement.

The chapter-wise breakup of the book remains rather unsatisfactory. It was difficult to adhere to a strict temporal or spatial framework. Different regions were attacked at different times by different people, and within regions some temples were repeatedly desecrated over the centuries. The fact that regional boundaries were not sharply etched added to the difficulties. These constraints have influenced the layout of the book. As each chapter stands alone, it is hoped this would not cause too much disquiet to the reader.

I have incurred many debts in writing this work, which I am happy to acknowledge. My deepest gratitude is to Dr. R. Nagaswamy, who shared his wealth of knowledge on the subject and gifted books not readily accessible. I benefitted enormously from discussions with the fine scholar and art historian, Dr. Kirit Mankodi who has also been actively engaged in tracking stolen artefacts in foreign lands. He kindly provided me with many of his writings on heritage sites in Central India and Gujarat. Shri B.M. Pande has always been most helpful and offered valuable suggestions on an earlier draft. He was also instrumental in the publication of some of my earlier works. Dr. B.R. Mani first provided details of the deity of the Sikarwar Rajputs, and its flight after the battle of Khanua. Madhukar Shah of the erstwhile Orchha royal family, narrated oral traditions of the Rama *murti* his ancestor, queen Ganesh Kunwari brought from Ayodhya.

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NOTES

1. Images seemed intrinsically linked with belief systems in India. The large number of mother goddess figurines found at sites of the Indus Valley Civilization could indicate worship in private residences. Kautilya, in the *Arthasastra*, mentioned the abundance of temples and shrines for the family deity of the king, and tutelary deities of various groups living in different quarters of Pataliputra (Kautilya 1992: 54).

   Inscriptional and archaeological evidence from Mathura indicated the existence of a Jain stupa by at least the first century BCE. In addition, four inscriptions confirmed the presence of several Jain shrines in Mathura, from the second century BCE. Among their patrons was a layman who gifted the arch (*torana)* for a temple; a laywoman who bequeathed a temple; a woman, who along with her entire household donated a Jina shrine; and a woman who installed an image of Mahavira in a Jina temple and also bequeathed a shrine. Possibly, the culture of shrines originated in the second century BCE, but was certainly in existence by the first century BCE. Images developed almost simultaneously in the three traditions, possibly in Mathura (Cort 2010: 18, 30-32).

   In 1937, some villagers in Lohanipur found Jina images near the site of ancient Pataliputra. The finds included two stone torsos in the bed of an abandoned canal. The villagers placed them in a nearby mango orchard and began to worship them. The larger torso was a little over two feet tall, the smaller one around a foot high. K.P. Jayaswal of Patna Museum said the larger torso was "the oldest Jaina image yet found in India, and it must belong at the latest to the Mauryan period," i.e. third century BCE. This was confirmed by an excavation at the site which revealed a Mauryan coin, and several Mauryan bricks that formed the foundation of a square temple, measuring 8 feet and 10 inches on each side. Jayaswal dated the second image several centuries later than the taller one (Cort 2010: 32-34).
2. The tenacious pledge to a sacred site was continually displayed. At the edge of Cholistan desert, was a tenth century temple, now known as Pattan Munara (Pl. 4). The Pakistani

archaeologist, Rafique Mughal identified its tower as the "remains of a pre-Islamic shrine," and the site as "early historical and Islamic." Till the nineteenth century, an important annual fair used to be held at Pattan Munara. Early British Gazetteers recorded, "The Hindu Rajas and chiefs of Sindh, Bikaner, and Jaisalmer used to visit the tower as late as the beginning of the 18th century and annually celebrated a *mela*, called Shivaratri, in the month of Mangh." A structure was pulled down in the nineteenth century, and a mosque built to discourage Muslim women from worshipping the temple's *linga* (Meister 2010: 52-57).

Michael Meister, who studied the Salt Range and Indus temples, noted 'continuity of local worship,' and the use of the same spot for Hindu shrines. The Katas Raj temple still had a stairway in the southern wall of its entry portico that led to an upper ambulatory chamber. The temple was repeatedly rebuilt and repaired to keep it in active worship (Meister 2010: 16).

An interesting find of buried statuaries came from Sanghol, Punjab. The site was not identified through a textual source. It was only after excavations commenced and the size of the site was realized that a textual identification was made. In the early twentieth century, the villagers of Sanghol frequently unearthed antiquities when tilling their fields. Though they informed archaeologists about their finds, they were not taken seriously. A resident of Sanghol, G.B. Sharma, who after a career in the Air Force earned an M.A. in Archaeology from Kurukshetra University, brought his collection of coins and seals to archaeologists A.K. Narain and Dr. Chhabra, for their assessment. After his finds were reported in local newspapers, the Government of Punjab stepped in (Michon 2010: 72-74). Altogether thirteen archaeological excavations spread over several sites were undertaken by three archaeological units under two separate bodies. S.S. Talwar and R.S. Bisht, under the Punjab Government Archaeological Department, excavated for five seasons from 1969 to 1973. The excavations revealed two Buddhist stupas (nos. 1 and 2) in the area SGL-5 and SGL-11 respectively (Kuwayama 1997: 133). During the third excavation season (1970-71), Talwar and Bisht noticed a small mound on the north of the Hathiawara or Citadel that was locally known as "the Manthan". They unearthed the spokes of a stupa's *anda*, and another structure to the east they called 'a Bodhi tree enclosure' (Michon 2010: 86-87; Michon 2015: 213).

On 1st February 1985, Yog Raj, a member of G.B. Sharma's team, discovered in a pit a hoard of 117 Mathura sculptures on 69 upright pillars, 13 coping stones, and 35 cross bars at the excavation site SGL-5 (Yog Raj 1985: 15-16). Sanghol was located on the route from Mathura to Gandhara. Stupa 1 at Sanghol resembled a typically Gandhara stupa, while the 117 pieces found as a hoard buried in the earth were of the Mathura school. S.P. Gupta noted the close resemblance of the stupa railings with those of Kankali Tila, raising the possibility that the Sanghol stupa belonged to the early Kushan period of the first to second century CE (Kuwayama 1997: 136). The excavations suggested that SGL-5 was founded in the late 2nd to early 1st century BCE. It was in use till the 4th and 5th century CE. Excavations at SGL-11 indicated that the complex had been used between the 2nd century BCE and 5th century CE (Michon 2015: 219, 227). The report on the ASI excavations seemed to have been written by Sharma, who knew the area, "Phase II-B contains kiln baked cakes – I hazard a guess that this is some sort of fire worship. Still today in the area on Dussehra, such cakes with finger marks in the centre are prepared of cow dung. They are then smeared with curd, rice, and sweets, threads are wound around them: [that is] *bade baderian di pooja* – worship of the elders. These customs, which may not find any literary reference, still continue in the society even today" (Michon 2010: 79-80). Being from Sanghol, Sharma was able to note that this ancient custom had survived till his time.

In trench BX-I at SGL-2, a pit labelled 'Ia' contained several antiquities. It seemed to have been intentionally created to contain 'stashes of antiquities.' Why were these artefacts buried together? (Michon 2010: 80). Could it be an emergency devise in the face of a sudden threat?

3. Several inscriptions in the Hathigumpha cave, dated up to the tenth-eleventh centuries CE, confirmed it was a sacred site

of long standing. That could be the reason Kharvela chose it for his inscription. Possibly Mahavira had preached there. Line 14 of the inscription clearly referred to the preaching of Jainism. The inscription, in Prakrit, seemed to have been composed by a Jain monk from Gujarat or Maharashtra (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XX: 72-73). The inscription contained perhaps the first mention of *Bharadhvasa* (Sanskrit – *Bharatavarsha*), which referred to the plains of northern India (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XX: 78).

4. The Muslim invasions that commenced in the seventh century CE had a great bearing on the history of India. Many fierce battles were fought in Sindh and elsewhere in the northwest, in which local rulers offered stiff resistance to the invaders. An early reference to the Tajikas (Arabs?) occurred in the Kavi plate from Broach district, Gujarat, dated 736 CE. It acclaimed the military prowess of Jayabhata IV, a Gurjara feudatory of the Maitraka ruler of Valabhi, against Tajikas. Jayabhata was able, "even as a cloud extinguishes with its showers the fire that troubles all people," to put an end to the unending miseries of the people (*asesa-loka-santapa*). A military raid had taken place on the city of Valabhi from Sindh, which had fallen to the Arabs in 712 CE (Chattopadhyaya 1998: 32).

   The Navasari plates of the Chalukya ruler, Avanijanashraya Pulakesin, dated 739 CE, listed the ruling houses that had been overwhelmed by attacks of the Tajikas. It stated, "When the army of the Tajikas, — which poured forth arrows, javelins and iron-headed clubs; which destroyed, with its rapidly brandished and glittering swords, the prosperous Saindhava, Kacchella, Saurastra, Cavotaka, Maurya and Gurjara and other kings ..." (*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* Vol. IV Part 1-2: 137-145). The invasions were undertaken by the officers of Junaid, general of Khalifa Hasham. Avanijanashraya Pulakesin routed the Arabs near Navasari, and turned back the tide of invasions from peninsular India. A somewhat later inscription of Pratihara Vatsaraja, dated 795 CE, referred to the Pratihara rulers, Nagabhata I and Vatsaraja, and their victories over Mleccha kings (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XXXXI: 49-57).

   An early epigraphic reference to the Turushkas (Turks?) as political adversaries occurred in a fragmentary inscription found at Hund, Attock district, Pakistan. The inscription, in Sharda characters and Sanskrit language, was assigned, on palaeographic grounds to the second half of the eighth century CE. It referred to the defeat of a Muslim army in the Sindhu country by the local ruler, Anantadeva, whom it lauded "as dexterous in the task of incessantly striking down the growing and formidable might of the Turushkas." The recovery of the inscription from Hund indicated that his kingdom bordered on Muslim holdings in Gandhara and Multan. The epithet, *udrikta-Turushka-pushkala-bala-kshep-aika-dakshatman,* implied that he had struggled unceasingly to defeat the invaders (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XXXVIII Part I: 94-98).

5. A considerable number of "Hindu epics of resistance" were produced in the medieval period, particularly in Rajasthan, which embodied tales of Rajput resistance to Muslims (Ahmad 2003: 41-45).
6. In medieval India, sacred structures of non-Islamic faiths were edged out of public view. Excluding Rohtas (Bihar), the headquarters of Raja Man Singh in Bihar, almost no temples existed in Mughal palace towns. Man Singh constructed the Govindadeva temple at Vrindavan in the reign of Akbar, but that was a pilgrimage centre and had no Muslim buildings (Asher 2002: 122-123).

   In the Mughal capital of Shahjahanabad, mosques occupied commanding positions on the main roads of every neighbourhood. There was no area that had temples and no mosques; not even Hindu-populated sections like Katra Neel (Asher 2002: 125-128). That was in accordance with Shah Jahan's decree that "in every lane, bazar, square, and street" a mosque was to be found (Blake 1986: 180-181). A map of the city, dated around 1850 CE, showed most of the mosques of Shahjahanabad, but provided virtually no information on Hindu, Sikh, and Jain religious edifices (Ehlers and Krafft 2003: 21).

   An archaeological survey conducted in the early twentieth century listed 200 mosques constructed in the city between 1639 and 1857, of which half were built in the Mughal heydays, between 1639 and 1739. No temples were constructed in that period. Fifteen temples were built during the years 1739-1803, when Mughals were no longer dominant; and a record eighty-one in the period of British ascendancy in the city, from 1803 to 1857 (Blake 1991: 52, 110, 181). Even the temples constructed in Shahjahanabad between 1739 and 1857 were all virtually invisible, perhaps the result of a deliberate effort to keep them concealed from public view. There was nothing to even indicate their existence. Most were just small openings in alcoves, located in private courtyards surrounded by high walls. None of the temples built in the city in that period had the hallmark *shikhara*. The Digambar Jain Mandir and the Gauri Shankar temples were built later. The *shikhara* in the Kalkaji temple in south Delhi was added in 1816 (Asher 2002: 127-135).

The prototype of visible mosques and hidden temples was established early on. In Rohtas, for instance, the Jami Mosque was noticeable on the main arterial road, while a small temple built by Man Singh could not be seen from a distance. Local tradition had it that the mosque site was originally intended for a temple, but was turned into the Jama Masjid "for fear of the Emperor" (Ali 1983: 131-132). In his home state of Amber as well, a huge mosque was erected on the Delhi highway on Akbar's orders, while Man Singh's own Jagat Shiromani Temple, built in memory of his eldest son, remained veiled from public gaze.

In response to the felt need for unobtrusive shrines, Jain temples at Abu, Ranakpur, and Sanganer did not appear as temples from outside. In cities like Varanasi too, mosques were the conspicuous structures. Ahilya Bai Holkar's Visvanatha temple was built in a side lane of the Gyanvapi mosque (Asher 2002: 124-125).

7. The spectre of iconoclasm continued to manifest itself even in the twentieth century. The Bamiyan Buddhas, "the largest Buddhist sculptures in the world", had been carved out of rocks of the Hindu Kush mountains sometime between the 3rd and 5th centuries CE. They were damaged following Genghis Khan's annihilation of Bamiyan in 1221 CE. Later Nadir Shah also attacked the images. The legs were reportedly broken on orders of Aurangzeb (Sengupta 2002: 142-143). Both statues were blown up by the Taliban in March 2001, after

which the Justice Ministry issued a statement, "We have obeyed the orders of Allah by destroying the idols." The Taliban Minister for Information stated that the decision to destroy the Buddhas was taken on the advice of four hundred *ulema* across Afghanistan, who declared the statues un-Islamic (Pattanaik 2002: 138).

The Bamiyan Buddhas were not associated with any Buddhist or Hindu kingly power, certainly not in the twenty first century. They had to go because they were "idols". As the Lion of Al Lat, the temple of Bel, the Arch of Triumph, and countless heritage sites and statues in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries that fell victims to iconoclasm.

2

Sunset in Multan

The hypothesis that temples represented a mere alliance of king and deity was first tested in Multan. Hindus of the region, well after losing their kingdom to invading Arabs and Turks, struggled to remain faithful to their gods. With no king to protect them, for centuries they restored demolished temples and deities, till not a glimmer of hope remained...

EARLY HISTORY

Multan has been identified as the capital of the Malli people, who offered a stiff challenge to Alexander during his invasion of 326-325 BCE. It was known by several names, Kasyapapura, Hansapura, Sambapura, Prahladpura, and Adyasthana, all invocations to Vishnu or Surya. Tradition held that Multan was founded by Kasyapa, father of the twelve Adityas (or Sun gods) by Aditi; and of the Daityas (or Titans) by Diti. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Hiranya-kasipu (the Daitya), who refused to accept the omnipresence of Vishnu. Vishnu manifested himself in his Narasimha *avatar* at Multan during the reign of Hiranya-kasipu, whose son Prahalad was his ardent devotee. Hiranya-kasipu's great-grandson, Banasur was an adversary of Krishna.

Krishna's son, Samba, was said to have instituted Sun worship. The *Samba Purana* stated that Samba was cured of leprosy due to his devotion to Surya. As a mark of thankfulness, he constructed the Sun temple at Multan. According to the *Bhavishya Purana*, the name Adyasthana was used for the temple Samba built. Adya could well have been a corruption of the word Aditya or Sun (Cunningham 2006: 196-199; Hasan 2008: 86). The *Bhavishya Purana* also mentioned the existence of a golden image of Surya. The ancient belief in the origins of Multan validated its importance at the dawn of Indian history.[1]

CHINESE TRAVELLER DESCRIBED SUN TEMPLE

The Sun temple acquired great fame throughout India.[2] An early account of its sanctity was provided by the Chinese Buddhist scholar and pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang (602-664 CE) who came to Multan in 641 CE, in the time of the Rai dynasty. He called the city Meulo-san-pu-lo, Mulasthanpura (city of the frontier land), which was the first known mention of the name. Hiuen Tsang saw the splendidly attired golden icon in the Sun temple,

> There is a temple dedicated to the Sun, very magnificent and profusely decorated. The image of the Sun-deva is cast in yellow gold and ornamented with rare gems. Its divine insight is mysteriously manifested and its spiritual power made plain to all. Women play their music, light their torches, offer their flowers and perfumes to honour it. This custom has been continued from the very first. The kings and high families of the five Indies never fail to make their offerings of gems and precious stones (to this Deva). They have founded a house of mercy (happiness), in which they provide food, and drink, and medicines for the poor and sick, affording

> succour and sustenance. Men from all countries come here to offer up their prayers; there are always some thousands doing so (Beal 1884 Vol. II Book XI: 274-275).

THE ARABS IN SINDH

The most detailed account of the conditions in Sindh just prior to the establishment of Arab rule was provided by the *Chach Namah*, a Persian translation of an Arabic work by Ali, son of Muhammad Kufi, in 1216 CE. Two subsequent works – *Tarikh-i-Masumi* or *Tarikh–i-Sind* and *Tuhfatu-l-Kiram* – based their histories of that period on the *Chach Namah*. According to these chronicles, Hinduism and Buddhism flourished alongside at the time of the Arab invasions (Cousens 1929: 13).

The first Arab attack on Sindh occurred just a few years of the death of Prophet Muhammad. Intermittently for the next seventy-five years, the Arabs continued their advance, raiding and then annexing parts of Makran, the arid mountainous region of Sindh. Finally, in 711 CE an Arab army under the command of Muhammad bin Qasim, conquered the province.

Buddhists were then numerically strong and influential in the Indus Delta region, but few in Upper Sindh. Hindus were dominant in Upper Sindh, and equalled Buddhists in Lower Sindh and Makran (Maclean 1989: 6-7, 14). The two communities responded differently to the Arab advent. Buddhists tended to collaborate to a significantly greater extent and at an earlier date than Hindus. During the period of Arab ascendancy, Buddhism disappeared wholly as a viable religious system. Alberuni, the renowned medieval Muslim scholar and scientist (973-1050), who visited Sindh, was unable to locate a Buddhist informant for his work on Indian religions. Hinduism survived, though under severe pressure (Maclean 1989: 50-53).

Debal (identified with the ruins of Banbhore) was the first city to be stormed by Qasim. The ninth century Muslim historian, Al-Baladhuri, who wrote the most comprehensive account of early Islamic intrusions into India, recorded that a section of the population was killed in a massacre that lasted three days. The dead included two guardians of the famous Shiva temple. Qasim then marked out a quarter of the town for the Muhammadan garrison, built a mosque, and left behind four thousand men. The mosque at Debal was the first to be constructed in the Indian subcontinent (Wink 1990: 203).

Excavations at the site in 1958-1965 revealed a Shiva *linga* fixed on a *yonipitha,* besides one lying on the floor. Several other *lingas* had been re-used in the lowest tread of steps leading to the entrance of the mosque. The excavations exposed four building phases. The first was the original temple that had been in use till it was smashed in 712. A century later, Anbisa bin Ishaq, the new governor of Sindh, pulled down the upper portion of the temple and converted the lower part into a prison. Several blocks of the temple were used for restoring other structures in the city. The city's buildings were repaired after an earthquake in 854 CE. In 906, the edifice was converted into a mosque, which survived till the city turned into a ruin in the thirteenth century (Pal 2008: 75-78).

From Debal, Qasim marched to other towns including Nirun and Sadusan. At Nirun, he erected a mosque in place of the temple of Budh (Buddhist stupa), and appointed a crier to give the call for prayer (Cousens 1929: 20-22).

The major battle was with Dahir, the last Hindu ruler of Sindh. Multan was besieged for over two months, and water supply to the beleaguered city cut off by the invaders. It finally fell due to treachery; one of its inhabitants pointed to a weak section of the walls which Qasim promptly breached, and sacked the town (Cousens 1929: 27). According to Al-Baladhuri, "he made captives of the custodians of the *budd,* numbering 6000," and confiscated the wealth, but not the Sun image (Wink 1990: 187).

THE GREAT TEMPLE OF MULTAN

Qasim was informed that the wealth of the city was due to a temple on the eastern side. It was owing to that temple that early Arabs called the place Farj, or "House of Gold." Alberuni related the fate of the temple,

> When Muhammad Ibn Alkasim Ibn Almunabbih conquered Multan, he inquired how the town had become so very flourishing and so many treasures had there been accumulated, and then he found out that this idol was the cause, for there came pilgrims from all sides to visit it. Therefore he thought it best to have the idol where it was, but he hung a piece of cow's-flesh on its neck by way of mockery. On the same place a mosque was built (Alberuni 1910: 116-117).

The people of Multan saved the temple by agreeing to surrender one-third of its income. Each pilgrim had to offer a sum of money at the temple ranging from one hundred to ten thousand *dirhams*, according to his financial situation. The pilgrimage was not considered valid till that was done. The money that accrued to the temple was divided into three equal parts. One portion was given to the Muslims, one kept for the improvement of the city and its fortifications. A third was set aside for the guardians of the temple and its upkeep (Friedmann 1972: 178).

TEMPLE DESTROYED

The temple survived that way till it was destroyed in 986 CE by the Karmatians (a branch of Ismaili Shia Islam), when they became masters of Multan. According to Alberuni,

> When then the Karmatians occupied Multan, Jalam Ibn Shaiban, the usurper, broke the idol into pieces and killed its priests (Alberuni 1910: 116-117).

A new mosque was erected to replace the one built by Qasim, which was ordered to be closed. Subsequently, Mahmud Ghaznavi captured Multan in 1005-06 CE. He restored the old mosque as the place of Friday prayers, leaving the Shia mosque to decay. The inhabitants of Multan were said to have been forced to pay a fine twenty million dirhams to save the city from being sacked by him (Bosworth 1992: 76).

ARAB ACCOUNTS OF THE SUN TEMPLE

Several Arab and Persian visitors to Multan described the popularity of the Sun temple.[3] Al-Masudi, the Arab historian and geographer, who visited the valley of the Indus in 915 CE, wrote,

> The inhabitants of Sindh and India perform pilgrimages to it from the most distant places: they carry money, precious stones, aloe wood, and all sorts of perfumes there to fulfil their vows. The greatest part of the revenue of the king of Multan is derived from the rich presents brought the idol of the pure aloe-wood of Kumar ... (Elliot and Dowson Vol. I: 23).

Abu Zaidu-l Hasan of Sira (d. 950) stated,

> The idol called Multan is situated in the environs of Mansura, and people come on pilgrimages to it from many months distance. They bring thither the Indian aloes called *al kamruni*, from Kamrun, the name of the country in which it grows. These aloes are of the finest quality. They are given to the ministers of the temple for use as incense. These aloes are sometimes worth as much as two hundred dinars a *mana*. The aloes are so soft that they will receive the impression of a seal. Merchants buy them of the ministers of the temple (Elliot and Dowson Vol. I: 11).

IMAGE OF WOOD COVERED WITH RED SKIN

The golden image Hiuen Tsang described was removed by Muhammad b. Qasim at the time of the initial Arab conquest.

However, worshippers of the deity substituted it with a wooden one covered with leather. All later Muslim descriptions were of the restored image (Maclean 1989: 19).

The medieval Persian geographer, Istakhari noted around 951 CE that the image was greatly venerated by Hindus, and every year people from most distant parts undertook pilgrimage to it. He described the image,

> There is an idol there held in great veneration by the Hindus, and every year people from the most distant parts undertake pilgrimages to it, and bring to it vast sums of money, which they expend upon the temple and on those who lead there a life of devotion.... The idol has a human shape, and seated with its legs bent in a quadrangular posture on a throne made of brick and mortar. Its whole body is covered with a red skin like Morocco leather, and nothing but its eyes are visible. Some believe that the body is made of wood, some deny this; but the body is not allowed to be uncovered to decide the point. The eyes of the idol are precious gems, and its head is covered with a crown of gold.... When the Indians make war upon them and endeavour to seize the idol, the inhabitants bring it out, pretending that they will break it and burn it. Upon this the Indians retire, otherwise they would destroy Multan (Zaki 1981: 33-34).

Alberuni also presented a similar portrayal of the image,

> A famous idol of theirs was that of Multan, dedicated to the sun, and therefore called *Aditya*. It was of wood and covered with red Cordovan leather; in its two eyes were two red rubies... (Alberuni 1910: 116-117).

According to Alberuni, the Sun temple was no longer visited by pilgrims as it had been demolished by the Shias (Wink 1990: 188). After the decline of the Ghaznavid dynasty, Shias again became masters of Multan. They were not finally expelled until 1176 CE, when Muhammad Ghori led an expedition against Multan (Latif 1891: 14-15).

TEMPLE REBUILT

Even bereft of political power, Hindus succeeded in re-establishing the temple and image. Al-Idrisi of Morocco, writing around 1130 CE, observed that the Sun god was being worshipped with as much enthusiasm as before,

> There is an idol here, which is highly venerated by the Indians, who come on pilgrimages to visit it from the most distant parts of the country, and make offerings of valuables, ornaments, and immense quantities of perfumes. This idol is surrounded by its servants and slaves, who feed and dress upon the produce of these rich offerings. It is in human form with four sides, and is sitting upon a seat made of bricks and plaster. It is entirely covered with a skin like red morocco, so that the eyes only are visible. Some maintain that the interior is made of wood, but others deny this. However it may be, the body is entirely covered. The eyes are formed of precious stones, and upon its head is a golden crown set with jewels. ...
>
> The temple of this idol is situated in the middle of Multan, in the most frequented bazaar. It is a dome-shaped building. The upper part of the dome is gilded, and the dome and the gates are of great solidity. The columns are very lofty, and the walls coloured...There is no idol in India or in Sindh which is more highly venerated. The people make it the object of a pious pilgrimage and to obey it is a law. So far is this carried out, that, when neighbouring princes make war against the country of Multan, either for the purpose of plunder or for carrying off the idol, the priests have only to meet, threaten the aggressors with its anger and predict their destruction, and the assailants at once renounce their design. Without this fear the town of Multan would be destroyed. It is not surprising, then, that the inhabitants adore this idol, exalt its power, and maintain that its presence secures divine protection (Elliot and Dowson Vol. I: 81-82).

FEW WORSHIPPERS LEFT

However, Zakaria Al Kazwini, writing around 1263 CE, said the only image worshippers left in the city resided in the precincts of the temple,

> (Multan) is a large fortified and impregnable city, and is held in high esteem by the Hindus and Chinese for it contains a temple which is for them a place of worship and pilgrimage, as Mecca is for the Muhammadans... The houses of the servants and devotees are around the temple, and there are no idol worshippers in Multan besides those who dwell in these precincts (Elliot and Dowson Vol. I: 96).

Before Timur's invasion of India in 1398, his grandson, Prince Pir Mahomed Jahangir invaded Multan in 1396 and took possession of the city. After Timur's departure, there was no kingdom worth the name in India for a considerable period of time.

EUROPEAN TRAVELLERS

Thomas Herbert, perhaps the earliest European traveller to mention Multan, provided no information on the Sun temple (Herbert 1638: 83, 90). However, the French traveller Jean de Thevenot (1633-1667) in 1666 CE, referred to the continuing worship of the image clothed in red leather,

> ... from all places of Multan, Lahors, and other Countries, they come thither in Pulgrimage. I know not the name of the Idol that is Worshipped there; the Face of it is black, and it is cloathed in red Leather: It hath two Pearls in place of Eyes; and the Emir or Governour of the Countrey, takes the Offerings that are presented to it ... (Thevenot 1949: 78).

All observers from the time of Istakhari (951) till Thevenot (1666) described the image as made of wood and covered with red Cordovan leather. The image Hiuen Tsang had seen was "cast in yellow gold and ornamented with rare gems." Alberuni stated that the Sun temple was destroyed in 986 and the image broken to pieces. Was a wooden image substituted by devotees as a cautionary measure? Did that same image remain in worship from 951 CE onward? Was it secreted away at every moment of peril, and brought back when the threat abated?

The Sun temple was again devastated in the reign of Aurangzeb and a Jama Masjid constructed at the site. Subsequently, the Sikhs converted the masjid into a powder magazine, which was blown up by a shell from British batteries in 1848 CE, in the course of the second Sikh War (Maclagan 1926: 274).

Today, only the ruins of the temple remain (Pl. 5). Interestingly, a stone image of the Sun god was recovered from the site and is now housed in a museum in England (Pl. 6).

PRAHLADPURI TEMPLE

The Prahladpuri temple in Multan was also subjected to repeated destruction. It stood at the site of the original temple believed to have been constructed by Prahalad. It was there that the Narasimha avatar was said to have appeared out of a pillar, and saved Prahalad from his father. The festival of *Hollika Dahan* commenced from that site.

DEMOLISHED, REBUILT

The temple was wrecked several times and mosques built in its streets. The shrine of Bahawal Haqq (Baha-ud-din Zakariya) was constructed adjacent to it. The Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan used twelve temple pillars in the construction of a mosque. When the mosque caved in, Hindus again raised a temple at that site, and instated the image. The temple was rebuilt in the early nineteenth century when the area came under Sikh control. In 1810, Hindus increased the height of the temple spire, which led to protests by guardians of the neighbouring mosque, and ended in a serious riot. When British explorer and diplomat, Alexander Burnes (1805-1841) visited Multan in 1831, it was the principal shrine. But its roof came down due to the explosion of a powder magazine during the siege in January 1849, and was not repaired. Archaeologist, Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893), who was in Multan in 1853, found it "quite deserted." The shrine was subsequently repaired by subscription, and a new image of Narasimha instated around 1872. It was well supported by the Sikh government and retained some revenue-free lands. In the early twentieth century, a fair used to be held at *Narsimha Chaudush* in May (Maclagan 1926: 276-277, 286). The temple was located on top of a raised platform inside Multan Fort. It was now under the control of Hazrat Baha-ud-din Zakariya administration, and no one was permitted entry (Pl. 7).

The image of Narasimha was said to have been removed from the temple for safety and at some point instated in a temple at Haridwar, where it remains under worship to this day (Pl. 8).

SURAJ KUND

Another place of great antiquity in Multan associated with worship of the Sun God was Suraj Kund, pool of the Sun. It was linked with the worship of the Sun and Narasimha, Multan being a celebrated centre of both. Annual fairs were held, one in winter and the other in summer (Maclagan 1926: 290).

TOTLA MAI – SHRINE RECONSTRUCTED

The shrine of Totla Mai used to stand on an immense mound that marked an early location of the city. In Aurangzeb's time, an attempt was made to convert the temple into a mosque. The Goddess was said to have walked out of the temple and jumped into the adjoining well, still known as *Muratwala* well. However, the temple priest cured the Emperor's son of an ailment, and was allowed to retrieve the image and take it to a house in the city. Under Sikh rule, the present small shrine was constructed (Maclagan 1926: 290-291).

All in all, for over ten centuries, the tenacity of devotees ensured the survival of temples and deities even in the absence of a protective Hindu king.

NOTES

1. The antiquarian remains in Sindh fell into three categories; prehistoric, pre-Muhammadan, and Muhammadan. The early history of the region was unclear. A ruler of Sindh was believed to have send help to the Kurus in their fight against the Pandavas in the Mahabharata war. Alexander's exhausted army fought its way on the land, and Nearchus gathered his fleet to take it from the unchartered waters of the great river to the sea. Around the sixth century CE, White Huns were present in the region (Cousens 1929: 7).
   One of the most interesting antiquarian discoveries in Sindh came from a field under plough, near Mirpur-Khas. It was a fine standing bronze image of Brahma, 3 feet 2 inches high, with the sacred thread over his left shoulder. It would have belonged to a temple of significance (Cousens 1929: 10).
2. Alexander Cunningham discovered three interesting silver coins in the neighbourhood of Multan (1872-73), all of which he believed referred to worship of the Sun god of Multan. His hypothesis was rejected by Whitehead, who argued that the coins did not belong to Sindh, nor was the deity of the Sun god of Multan (Whitehead 1947: 327-329).
3. Though worship of the Sun god centred primarily on the temple of Multan, there were other shrines dedicated to Sun worship, as indicated by the elaborate stone frame of Surya found in the ruins of Brahmanabad (Cousens 1925: 55). The *Chachnamah* actually referred to the Multan temple as *Mistravi* and *Minravi*, designations which clearly reflected *Mitravana* ('forest of Mitra'), an alternative Puranic appellation for Mulasthana (Maclean 1989: 18-19).

3

Kashmir – *Bhusvarga*

Kashmir, the land of scenic beauty and sacredness, was *Bhusvarga* – heaven on earth. The name Kashmir (Kasmir) was believed to be a corrupt form of Kasyapa-*mar*, Kasyapa's garden (after *rishi* Kasyapa, grandson of Brahma). Kalhana, author of the *Rajatarangini*, described Kashmir as a place "where there is not a space as large as a grain of sesamum without a *tirtha*" (*Rajatarangini* Vol. II: 367). Its every spring, lake, and river had a blessed mission to wash away the sins of the faithful. The hallowed Vitasta contained within its waters all that was holy in the world.

Since early times Kashmir was a principal seat of Indian civilization. It was said that at the time of his initiation, every boy in north and south India had to take seven paces in the direction of Kashmir as a symbolic gesture that he had undertaken a pilgrimage to that land for learning. Kashmir was the setting of the revered *Shardapitha*, the eternally pure seat of Ma Sharda.

Sir Walter R. Lawrence (ICS) recorded that the Valley of Kashmir was the 'holy land' of the Hindus, and he had rarely been to a village which could not show some relic of antiquity,

> Curious stone miniatures of the old Kashmiri temples (*Kulr-Muru*), huge stone seats of Mahadeo (*Badrpith*) inverted by pious Musalmans, Phallic emblems innumerable, and carved images heaped in grotesque confusion by some clear spring, have met me at every turn (Lawrence 1895: 161).

Kashmir contributed to the spread of Buddhism in foreign lands, particularly China and Tibet. Kumarajiva (334-413 CE), whose father was from Kashmir and mother from the kingdom of Kucha, was a renowned Buddhist monk and scholar. He studied Hinayana Buddhism, later turned to Mahayana Buddhism, and attained great recognition in India and China. He eventually settled in the latter country, and translated Buddhist texts written in Sanskrit into Chinese, during the time of the later Chin dynasty (384-417 CE). He was conferred the title Tungsheo, "although young in years he was ripe in the wisdom and virtues of old age." He was referred to as "one of the four Suns of Buddhism," and was credited with the introduction of a new alphabet (Kak 2000: 2-3).

The great philosopher, Abhinavagupta (950-1016 CE) hailed from a family of scholars, and composed over thirty-five widely acclaimed works, among them *Tantraloka*, a treatise on Trika and Kaula (Kashmir Shaivism). Poets and litterateurs like Kshemendra and Bilhana lent heft to Kashmir's standing as the land of learning, *Sharda Desh*. Many of Kashmir's pandits were honoured guests of Indian princes. Bilhana wrote his work, *Vikaramankadevacharita* at the court of Vikramaditya VI (1075-1126) of Kalyana. He fondly recalled the land of his birth, where ladies in every house in the city could converse in Sanskrit as fluently as in their mother tongue (Kawthekar 1995).

Kashmir's beauty was first described to the Western world by Father Jerome Xavier who accompanied Emperor Akbar to the province, "...the Kingdom of Caxmir is one of the pleasantest and most beautiful countries to be found in the whole of India, we may even say in the East" (Keenan 1989: 73). The French physician and traveller, Francois Bernier (1620-1688), who wrote an exhaustive account of the region, stated that Kashmir "surpasses in beauty all that my warm imagination had anticipated" (Bernier 1916: 393-442).

Alberuni described a festival in Kashmir that celebrated victory over Turks,

> The second of the month of Chaitra is a festival to the people of Kashmir called Agdus (possibly a mispronunciation of Okduh, which in Kashmiri means the first day of a lunar fortnight), and celebrated on account of a victory gained by their king Mutai over the Turks (Alberuni 1910: 178).

HISTORIES OF KASHMIR

The most authoritative account of ancient and medieval Kashmir was the *Rajatarangini*, composed by Kalhana in 1148-49 CE. He was born in a family of Brahmin officials, and imbibed the traditions of the region from both oral and written sources. His father, Champaka, was the minister of king Harsa. Three centuries later, another Kashmiri Brahmin, Jonaraja, a contemporary and court historian of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1421-1472 CE), also wrote a *Rajatarangini*. The work was continued by his pupil, Srivara. Other historians followed, like Prayabhatta and Suka.

THE TEMPLE OF SHARDA IN KISANGANGA VALLEY

The shrine of Sharda Devi was at one time among the most revered in Kashmir, indeed India (Pl. 9). The *Sharda Mahatmya* narrated that once Muni Shandilya, son of Matanga, was practising great austerities to obtain sight of goddess Sharda (who as Shakti embodied Sharda, Sarasvati, and Vagdevi). A divine voice directed him to *Shardavana*, the sacred spot of Shardi (a small village and fort near the Sharda temple).

It was at the temple of Sharda that Shankaracharya was accepted as a religious scholar of the highest merit. Bilhana stated that it was because of Sharda that Kashmir was recognized as a centre of learning. The *Prabhavakacarita* (a work of the thirteenth century) narrated a tale about the temple. When king Jayasimha of Gujarat asked the Jain scholar, Hemachandra (1088-1172 CE) to compose a new grammar, the latter requested the king that he be provided with old grammars that could only be found in the library of the Sharda temple. These grammars were duly obtained, after which Hemachandra wrote the *Siddhahemachandra* (Stein *Rajatarangini* Vol. II: 286).

Alberuni had heard of the shrine of Sharda during his stay in the Panjab. He described it as much venerated and frequented by pilgrims, and accurately gave its location,

> In Inner Kashmir, about two or three days journey from the capital in the direction towards the mountains of Bolor, there is a wooden idol called *Sarada*, which is much venerated and frequented by pilgrims (Alberuni 1910: 117).

Major Charles Ellison Bates, who wrote *A Gazetteer of Kashmir*, described Shardi as "a village of some importance situated on the left bank of the Kishan Ganga, at the northern extremity of Upper Drawar."[1] He wrote of the temple,

> The temple, which consists of the usual cella surrounded by a walled enclosure, stands at the foot of a spur which rises above the right bank of the Madhumati stream. The temple is approached by a stair-case about 9 feet wide, of steep, stone steps, some 63 in number... In the middle of the wall on the northside is an arched recess, which contains a *lingam*...The cella, which is about 22 feet square, stands on an elevated plinth about 4 feet from the present level of the ground...The entrance is approached by a flight of steps. ...
>
> The interior of the temple is square, and perfectly plain; on the ground lies a large rough slab of unpolished stone, somewhat like a huge mill-stone, which, with the walls, is

> smeared in places with red pigment, and flowers are inserted in cracks. This stone is said to have been disturbed by Mansur Khan, Rajah of Karnao, in search of treasure, ...exertions, however, were unsuccessful (Bates 1873: 338-340).

By the time the eminent Hungarian-British archaeologist, Aurel Stein (1862-1943) searched for the shrine in 1892 CE, it had become "almost unknown to the Pandits of Srinagar." In his quest, he was greatly aided by the clear indications Kalhana had provided. Also helpful were Brahmins of the adjoining tracts, who had sustained the tradition of pilgrimage to the shrine.

Stein found the interior of the shrine bereft of any ornamentation. The only noticeable object there was the large rough slab on the ground measuring about six by seven feet, and about half a foot thick. The stone was believed to cover a *kunda*, or spring. According to the *Sharda Mahatmya*, the slab marked the sacred spot where Sharda appeared before Shandilya. It was the object of special reverence of pilgrims. When Stein visited, a red cloth canopy with plenty of tinsel covered the sacred spot. Conches, bells, and other implements of worship filled the remainder of the interior space.

According to Chandra Pandit, who guided Stein, the temple had been almost deserted prior to the Sikh invasion, when the Muhammadan Rajas of Karnav ruled as practically independent chiefs in the Kisanganga Valley. Under one of them, the shrine was used for the storage of gunpowder, the explosion of which blew off the original roof. The temple was subsequently repaired by Maharaja Gulab Singh. He also settled a small sum of seven rupees *Chilki* per mensem on the family of Gotheng Brahmins, to which Chandra Pandit belonged, and which claimed hereditary guardianship of the temple.

Besides the care of these appointed guardians, the shrine also benefitted from the presence of a small Hindu community in the garrison of the neighbouring fort of Shardi (Pl. 10). The fort stood almost opposite the temple, and was erected in Maharaja Gulab Singh's time, to guard the valley from marauders. Stein found a small garrison of Dogras and Sikhs, about forty in all. They took interest in "the sacred shrine entrusted, as it were, to their care." They also supported a Hindu mendicant from the plains as an attendant of the goddess (Stein Note B i. 37 *Rajatarangini* Vol. II: 279-284).

The temple of Sharda continued to enjoy great eminence. Abul Fazl wrote of the site:

> At two days' distance from Haehamun is the river named Padmati which flows from the Dardu country. Gold is also found in this river. On its banks is a stone-temple called Sharada, dedicated to Durga and regarded with great veneration. On every eighth *tithi* of *Shulkapaksha,* it begins to shake and produces the most extraordinary effect (*Ain-i-Akbari* Vol. II 1927: 365).

From Abul Fazl's account, it appeared that a miracle-working image of Sharda, probably the same which Alberuni had heard about, was in existence in the sixteenth century.[2]

SHARIKA DEVI – REMOVED FROM HER SHRINE IN TROUBLED TIMES

Sharika Devi (a manifestation of the eighteen-armed Durga) was regarded the presiding deity of Srinagar city. According to legend, Durga took the form of Sharika, or starling, and carried a pebble in her beak, which she dropped on the demon, Jalodbhava. The pebble grew into a mountain and crushed the demon, thus saving the city from his depredations. Since then the goddess was worshipped in the form of a rock which occupied the centre of the western hill facing the city. The rock was smeared with vermilion. Sharika was represented by a *svayambhu,* a naturally engraved *Sri chakra* on a green, circular shaped sapphire (Warikoo 2009: 150).

In 1170 CE, at a turbulent moment in Kashmir's history, a glazed black stone *murti* of Sharika Devi was taken from her abode on Hari Parbat in Kashmir Valley to Sarthal Kistwar by king Ugra Dev. She was brought via Singhpora pass to the cave where the temple remains situated (Pushkar).

Subsequently, the site was attacked by Shamsu'd Din Araki, an Iranian Shia Muslim missionary, who visited Kashmir after the death of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, "to pull down the idol houses of infidels and polytheists and to put an end to the customs, traditions and habits of the kafirs (infidels)..." (Pandit 2009: xi-xix, 95). According to his biography, the *Tohfatul–Ahhab* (1642 CE),

> Shamsu'd Din Araki began his enterprise (of destroying temples) with the Koh-i-Maran (Har Parbat hillock or Sharika Parvata, situated in downtown Srinagar)... There existed a big idol temple on top of Koh-i-Maran. In Kashmiri, it was called Hareh Blari (Hareh Brari). Groups and clans of Hindu infidels, heretics and unbelievers circumambulated it ...They observed the practices and rites of infidelity and polytheism...(They) were joined by the Sultan, the officials, the nobles, the heretics, the miscreants and the wretched lot... Its foundation was dismantled, and the idol house was set on fire till it was fully consumed in flames. The bright candle of religion and Islam brought by the Prophet, and the law of his religion and the path of Mustafa and Murtaza (Ali) was lighted (Pandit 2009: 211-218).

A LOST TEMPLE DISCOVERED

The *Rajatarangini* recorded the fascinating story of a lost temple, concerning Lalitaditya Muktapida, the great king of the Karkota dynasty who brought almost the entire north India under his control. Lalitaditya once went out on an untrained horse, in order to tame it. He saw two maidens, one singing and the other dancing. A short while later, when he was exercising the horse, he saw that the two, after completing their song and dance, bowed slightly and left. He visited the place repeatedly, and each time saw the two girls re-enacting the song and dance. He then enquired from them what they were doing. They told him they were dancing-girls belonging to a temple. The village of Suravardhamana was their home. Their mothers, who obtained their living there, had directed them to perform at the spot, "which our descent makes incumbent." "This custom, handed down by tradition, has become fixed in our family. Its reason we cannot know, nor can anyone else."

On learning of this, the astonished king ordered the entire ground to be dug up. The excavations revealed two decayed temples with closed doors. On opening the doors, were found two images of Keshava, "which, as the letters engraved on the bases (*pitha*) showed, had been made by *Rama* and *Laksmana*."

The King had a separate stone building constructed by the side of the temple of Vishnu *Parihasakesava*, and the image of *Ramasvamin* was consecrated there. The image of *Laksmanasvamin* was instated by queen Cakramardika by the side of Shiva *Cakresvara*, after she had obtained it on request from the king (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 147-148).

MARTANDA TEMPLE

The *Rajatarangini* referred to many temples built by Lalitaditya (Pl. 11). Among them was "the wonderful [shrine] of *Martanda*, with its massive walls of stone within a lofty enclosure (*prasadantar*), and its town swelling with grapes" (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 141). The *Martanda Mahatmya* related the legend that connected the sacred springs of Martanda *tirtha* with the production of the Sun from the lifeless egg (*mrtanda*) which Aditi, wife of Kasyapa, had brought forth as her thirteenth child. The *tirtha* of Martanda was mentioned in the *Nilamata Purana* (verse 1036) as among the places sacred to Surya.[3]

The Martanda temple was commonly called Pandu-Koru, house of the Pandus and Korus (Bates 1873: 270). It was the most described site of Kashmir. G.T. Vigne (1801-1863), the Englishman who came as a private traveller and not as an employee of the East India Company, wrote of the temple ruins that indicated its scale and architectural beauty. Vigne stated,

> At the village of Mar-tund, or 'the Sun,' ... is the most holy spring in Kashmir, called, *par excellence*, Bawun, or spring. It is said that, after the valley was dried, small hills and caves appeared, and that Kashuf Rishi walked about in the greatest delight; that he accidentally found an egg (the mundane egg of the Hindus) shining most brilliantly, which he picked up. He broke it in his hand, and from it flowed the springs of Bawun or Maha Martund, sacred, of course, to Vishnu...Houses of Hindus surround the small tank which is formed near it ... (Vigne Vol. I 1844: 359).

The British army explorer, Francis Younghusband (1816-1942) pronounced the temple as "... the finest structure, typical of Kashmir architecture at its best, built on the most sublime site occupied by any building in the world – far finer than the site of the Parthenon, or of the Taj, or of St. Peters, or of the Escurial – we may take it as the representative, or rather the culmination of all the rest, and by it we must judge the people of Kashmir at their best" (Younghusband 1917: 135-136).

Aurel Stein, after a visit to the site assessed it as, "the most striking remains which have survived of the ancient architecture of Kashmir." Even at that time, he found the *tirtha* "one of the most celebrated pilgrimage-places in the Valley," that annually attracted visitors from all parts of India (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 141).

PARIHASAPURA

The *Rajatarangini* provided details of the temple of Parihasapura, also constructed by Lalitaditya, and the deities enshrined in it; "the glorious silver [image of Visnu] Parihasakesava [which] shone like the god [Visnu]...;" "the famous [image of] Visnu Muktakesava, made of gold; the [image of Visnu] Mahavaraha." The king also instated a silver image of Govardhanadhara. He raised a great stone pillar and placed a representation of Garuda on top (*Rajatarangini* Vol. I: 142). The Austrian noble, diplomat, and explorer, Charles Baron Hugel (1795-1870) described Parihasapura,

> It was adorned with many fine temples and monuments; among others, with a pillar cut out of one stone, twenty four yards high, at the top of which stood the image of Garuda, half-man and half-eagle (Hugel 1854: 159).

During his visit to Parihasapura (Paraspor) in September 1892, Aurel Stein was able to trace the ruins of the buildings that Kalhana had described (Pl. 12). Stein believed that the ruins contained the five great shrines Lalitaditya had built - Parihasakesava, Muktakesava, Mahavaraha, Govardhanadhara, and Rajavihara. The first four were temples dedicated to Vishnu, the fifth a Buddhist vihara (*Rajatarangini* Vol. II: 300-302).

Parihasapura suffered grievously after the reign of Lalitaditya. His son, Vajraditya shifted the royal residence from there. More injurious were the changes brought about by Avantivarman of the Utpala dynasty (855-833), who changed the course of the Vitasta (Mitra 1993: 28). Then king Sankar Varman (883-901 CE) used materials from Parihasapura for the construction of his new town and temples at Patan (Chaku and Chaku 2016: 81-86). Some of its shrines seemed to have survived to a later period, for the '*parisadyas*' or *purohitas* of Parihasapura were referred to as an influential body in the reign of Samgramaraja of the Lohara dynasty (1003-1028).

SIKANDER BUTSHIKAN

Many revered temples of Kashmir were destroyed by Sultan Sikander Butshikan, the Idol-breaker (1389-1413). Alexander

Cunningham observed that the tomb of his own queen in Srinagar was built on the foundation, and with the material, of a Hindu temple. The wall that surrounded the tomb of his son, Zain-ul-Abidin, was once the enclosure of a Hindu temple, and the entrance of a masjid in Nowa-Shehra (Srinagar), was formed of two fluted pillars of a Hindu peristyle. These examples showed that at least three different temples in the capital alone "must have been overthrown either by Sikandar or by one of his predecessors" (Cunningham 1848: 5).

Among the many temples devastated by Sikandar was the Martanda temple. The final destruction of the temples of Parihasapura was also attributed by chroniclers to him (*Rajatarangini* Vol. II: 303).

Sikandar was likewise credited with the devastation of Hindu and Buddhist shrines at Pandrethan. Pandrethan, 5 km to the south-east of Srinagar, was the site of ancient Srinagari, believed to have been founded by Emperor Ashoka. When William Moorcroft, George Trebeck, G.T. Vigne, and Alexander Cunningham visited Pandrethan in the first half of the nineteenth century, almost all the structures had been reduced to shapeless ruins. Viewing the large masses of stones on the slopes at the foot of the spur, Vigne was of the opinion that a city and a vast Hindu temple complex once existed there. Alexander Cunningham saw enormous *lingas* and ancient remains extending over a five km stretch from the foot of the Takht-i-Sulaiman (Shankaracharya hill). One mound near the slope of the spur, excavated by Daya Ram Sahni in 1913, revealed, besides several Buddhist sculptures, the remains of two dilapidated stone stupas and possibly a monastery, all assigned to the eighth century CE (Mitra 1993: 15-17).

The Buddhist sculptures found at the site are exhibited at the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar. Particularly noteworthy are two standing and one seated image of Buddha, and the upper portion of a sculpture depicting the birth of Siddhartha. Also on display are nearly twenty large images of Hindu deities, that were found at Pandrethan between 1923 and 1933. Most of the sculptures were more than life-size, with at least eight representing Shiva (Mitra 1993: 17-18).

The Avantisvamin Vishnu temple and the Avantisvara Shiva temple, both built at Avantipura by king Avantivarman (Pl. 13), also suffered at the hands of Sultan Sikander (Mitra 1993: 29-39). The Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India recorded,

> The process of destruction and denudation started in the later part of the reign of Sultan Sikandar (1389-1413) who earned the epithet *Butshikan* (idol breaker) by virtue of his breaking the images and demolishing the temples. Almost all the temples of the country are stated to have been desecrated and pulled down (or badly shattered) and the images were broken, mutilated, or thrown away from the temples. The destruction of the temples is believed to have been effected by piling heaps of timber in the temples and setting fire to these heaps (*Annual Report*, ASI, 1915-16, 1918: 56).

The Sultan was aided in the planned destruction by his minister Suhabhatta, a Brahmin convert to Islam. Jonaraja (d. 1459) presented a vivid picture of the persecution of Brahmins and the wholesale destruction of temples and images,

> The kingdom of Kashmira was polluted by the evil practices of the mlechchhas, and the Brahmanas, the mantras, and the gods relinquished their power. The gods who used to make the glory of their prowess manifest, even as fire-flies manifest their light, now hid their glory on account of the county's sin. When the gods withdrew their glory, their images became mere stones, and the mantras, mere letters... Suhabhatta who disregarded the acts enjoined by the Vedas, was instructed by the mlechchhas, instigated the king to break down the images of the gods... the king forgot his kingly duties and took a delight, day and night, in breaking images... He broke the images of Marttanda, Vishaya, Ishana, Chakrabhrit, and Tripureshvara; but what can be

> said of the evil that came on him by the breaking of the Shesha? ... There was no city, no town, no village, no wood, where Suha the Turushka left the temples of gods unbroken. Of the images which once had existed, the name alone was left, and Suhabhatta then felt the satisfaction which one feels on recovering from illness (Jonaraja 1986: 59-60).

It was said that on learning of the fanatical zeal of Sikandar, seven hundred Sayyids led by Muhammad Hamadani had migrated from Persia to Kashmir. Sikandar became a disciple of Muhammad Hamadani, whose arrival probably "led to the religious persecution which immediately ensued" (Bates 1873: 105; Chaku and Chaku 2016: 221). Sir Walter R. Lawrence summed up the oppression that was unleashed,

> It is a generally accepted fact that up to about the beginning of the fourteenth century the population of the valley was Hindu, and that about the middle and the end of the century the mass of the people was converted to Islam, through the efforts of Shah-i-Hamadam and his followers, and the violent bigotry and persecution of King Sikandar, the Iconoclast. Tradition affirms that the persecution of the Hindus was so keen that only eleven families of Hindus remained in the valley (Lawrence 1895: 302).
>
> There was a certain method in the mad zeal of Sikandar, for he used the plinths and friezes of the old temples for the embankments of the city and for the foundation of the Jama Masjid. Having glutted his vengeance on Hindu temples, Sikandar turned his attention to the people who had worshipped in them, and he offered them three choices, death, conversion or exile. Many fled, many were converted, and many were killed, and it is said that this thorough monarch burnt seven mounds of sacred thread of the murdered Brahmans. All the books of Hindu learning which he could lay his hands on were sunk in the Dal Lake and Sikandar flattered himself that he had extirpated Hinduism from the Valley (Lawrence 1895: 191).

There was noticeable relief in the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin, who ascended the throne in 1417, by when it is said all Hindus, except Brahmins, had accepted Islam (Lawrence 1895: 191-192).

And Ma Sharda, Surya (Martanda), Avantisvamin, Avantisvara, Varahmool, Meru Vardhana Swami, and deities of innumerable other shrines were banished forever from their sacred abodes ...

NOTES

1. The political conditions, combined with the tough route, led to the development of several substitutes of the ancient *tirthas* within the Valley. Among them was *Sharda kunda*, at the village of Tsatsa, close to Harvan, and about one and a half miles from the north-east corner of the Dal Lake. It was visited on the very day prescribed for the ancient Sharda pilgrimage. Another Sharda shrine was near the village of Kulyandi, in Khuyhom. A substitute shrine was created even on the route of the ancient Sharda *tirtha* (Stein *Rajatarangini* Vol. II: 288).
2. Jonaraja's *Chronicle* contained a strange account of the Sharda temple. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin went to the shrine in the year 1422 CE to witness the miraculous manifestations of the goddess. These were said to be the appearance of sweat on the face of the image, the shaking of an arm, and a sensation of heat on touching the feet. The goddess, however, showed no miracle to the Sultan. Having disappointed him, she was then said to have crushed her image to pieces. The destruction, rightly or wrongly, was connected with a pilgrimage of Zain-ul-Abidin to the site (Stein *Rajatarangini* Vol. II: 286-287).
3. Excavations at the site of the Martanda temple revealed the existence of an earlier smaller temple. When Lalitaditya built his temple, the base of the older temple was encased by a new base of larger dimensions. The older temple was probably the one built on that spot by king Ranaditya (Kak 2000: 131-135). During excavations in the temple courtyard, a number of large earthen jars were found embedded in the floor.

4

Delhi – Sacred Space Transformed

The first-known defence construction in Delhi, Lal Kot was built by the Tomar ruler, Anangpal at Mehrauli. The name Mehrauli derived from Mihirapuri (or Mihirapalli), which indicated the existence of a Sun temple. Mehrauli was also the locale of the Yogamaya temple, which additionally gave it the name Yoginipura, mentioned in the Palam Baoli inscription of 1274 CE, as an alternative of Dhilli (Delhi). Dhilli and Yoginipura figured frequently in the *pattavalis* of the Jains. The site where the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque and other early Islamic structures were erected, was once the citadel of the Tomars and Chauhans, represented by the ruins of Lal Kot and Qila Rai Pithora respectively (Pande 2006: 2-5).

The Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque was constructed by Qutubuddin Aibak to mark the victory of Muhammad Ghori over Prithviraj Chauhan, in the second battle of Tarain in 1192.[1] An inscription clearly stated that materials of twenty-seven pre-existing Hindu and Jain temples at that site were used for its construction.[2] The inscription quoted verses 91-2 from Surah

III of the Quran, which was followed by the text,

> This fort was conquered and this Jami'-Masji was built in the months of the year 587 by the Amir, the great and glorious commander of the Army, Qutb-ud-daula wad-din, the Amirul-umara Aibeg, the slave of the Sultan, may God strengthen his helpers. The materials of 27 temples, on each of which 2,000,000 Deliwals had been spent, were used in (construction of) this mosque. God the Great and Glorious may have mercy on that slave, everyone who is in favour of the good builder prays for his health (*Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* 1911-12: 13).

Nearly all the temple pillars used in the mosque had carved motifs, which were intentionally disfigured. Some lintels depicted scenes from the lives of Jain *tirthankaras*. Jain tradition holds that a temple dedicated to Parsvanatha existed at the site. The poet, Sridhara in his *Parshva Purana*, made a similar claim. The find of Jain sculptures and pillars lent credence to that belief. The Archaeological Survey of India was in possession of a square pillar with the figure of a seated *Tirthankara* on three sides and a Ganesh on the fourth that was recovered from the site. Also retrieved was a four-armed Vishnu, dated 1147 CE, currently displayed at the National Museum. The birth of Krishna was depicted on one of the lintels (Pl. 14) (Pande 2006: 21).

IRON PILLAR – UPROOTED FROM ITS HALLOWED SITE

In the thirteenth century, the Iron Pillar that originally stood at Vishnupadagiri ("Hill with the footprint of Vishnu"), Udayagiri, was uprooted and placed in front of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque complex (Pl. 15). The pillar had a three-stanza six-line Sanskrit inscription, dated between 400 and 450 CE, which recorded that it was erected by Chandra ("having in faith fixed his mind upon Vishnu") at Vishnupadagiri.

Based on a detailed study of the archer-type gold coins of the imperial Guptas, Professor R. Balasubramaniam identified

Chandra as the Gupta ruler, Chandragupta II Vikramaditya (375-414 CE). A distinctive feature of those coins was that the king's short name was inscribed on the obverse (i.e. region of the issuing monarch's figure), while his full name and title were mentioned in the circular legend. In all archer-type gold coins of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya, the short name of the king was inscribed as Chandra and his full title and name given in the circular legend (Balasubramaniam 2008: 26-28).

Art historian, Meera Dass showed that *pada* (foot) worship was an ancient practice in the region around Udayagiri. She cited veneration of an inscribed Vishnupada at Charan Tirth situated at the foot of Udayagiri hill, the Heliodorous pillar at nearby Besnagar, reverence of the footprints of Jain *Tirthankara* Shitalnath in Cave 20 at Udayagiri (dated as per an inscription in the cave to 426 CE), and the discovery of a Kushan-period brick with unfinished marking of a foot at Udayagiri. Further, she pointed to a tradition of iron-making in the Udayagiri-Vidisha-Besnagar-Sanchi region. She also noted the astronomical significance of Udayagiri (Vishnupadagiri), situated at 23°31′ latitude, almost on the Tropic of Cancer. It was a major centre for astronomical observations and Sun worship in ancient times (Dass 2001).

There was a flowering of astronomical knowledge during the reign of the imperial Guptas, with astronomers like Aryabhata, Varahamihira, and Brahmagupta. Udayagiri was developed as a major centre under Chandragupta II Vikramaditya; nineteen of the twenty cave temples at Udayagiri dated from his reign. The association of Udayagiri with Vishnu and the Sun was underscored by the invocation of Chandragupta's title, Vikramaditya which denoted the oneness of Vishnu and Surya (Balasubramaniam 2008: 31-36).

R. Balasubramaniam, who prepared a complete layout of Udayagiri, noted that the hill site was shaped like a foot. A saddle connected the northern and southern hills. A passageway was especially cut at the place where the northern hill met the saddle. That was the only path that led to the west of the hill, and was the main approach to the temple on the northern hilltop (identified by Michel Willis and Meera Dass as the Sun temple which was destroyed in the thirteenth century CE). An ancient elephant path underlined the importance of that corridor. Most of the cave temples were located around it, including Cave 5 (with the Varaha panel) and Cave 13 (with the image of *Anantasayin* Vishnu) (Balasubramaniam 2008: 32).

As the Udayagiri site was astronomically significant, the placement of the Iron Pillar was carefully planned. According to R. Balasubramaniam and Meera Dass, the pillar was placed in front of Cave 7, facing the passageway. The site was important as during the summer solstice, the early morning shadow of the Iron Pillar would fall on the feet of Vishnu in the *Anantasayin* Vishnu panel in Cave 13. Moreover, it was only in the period before and after the summer solstice that the early morning shadow of the Iron Pillar fell on the passageway in the direction of *Anantasayin* Vishnu. That was due to the special angle of the cut of the passageway. R. Balasubramaniam and Meera Dass pointed to many other fascinating details about the movement of the sun and the direction of sunrays regarding the Varaha and *Anantasayin* panels (Balasubramaniam and Dass 2004: 1134-1142; Balasubramaniam 2008: 35-36).

The decorative bell of the Iron Pillar originally had a *chakra* on top. The inscription on the Iron Pillar clearly stated that it was the standard of Vishnu (*Vishnuordhvajah*). One of the Vishnu panels in Cave 6 at Udayagiri depicted the Iron Pillar capital with the *chakra*. A cut was visible on the top surface of the Iron Pillar capital, into which the *chakra* would have fitted (Balasubramaniam 2008: 32-34).[3]

Iltutmish (r. 1210-1236 CE), the first Muslim ruler to pillage Malwa in 1234 CE, uprooted the Iron Pillar and placed it in the courtyard of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. The contemporary

Persian historian, Minhaj-us-Siraj (b. 1193) wrote of the spoils of the expedition,

> ... Some other images cast in copper were carried with the stone image of Maha-kal to Dehli (Elliot and Dowson Vol. II: 328). The Iron Pillar was among those "brass" objects (Balasubramaniam 2005: 25).

Shams-i Siraj Afif (d. 1388), in the mid-fourteenth century, explained Iltutmish's motives regarding the pillar,

> Every great king took care during his reign to set up some lasing memorial of his power. So sultan Shams al-Din Altamash raised the large pillar in the Masjid-i Jami at old Dehli, the history of which is well known (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 353).

While erecting the Iron Pillar at Delhi, the portion that had been buried underground at Udayagiri, was placed above ground level. That portion had been left uneven, so that the pillar could be firmly gripped to the foundation (Balasubramaniam 2008: 37).[4]

NOTES

1. The mosque bore the telling name Quwwat-ul-Islam, 'Might of Islam.' Qutab Minar was labelled 'a pillar of victory' not in its Arabic, but in the Nagari inscriptions inscribed on its lowest storey – and therefore more visible than the other inscriptions. The message to non-Muslims "could scarcely be more explicit" (Hillenbrand 2008: 235).
2. Certain academic circles no longer mention the demolition of twenty-seven Jain and Hindu temples to make the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. Rather, they describe the mosque as constructed of "recycled architectural components – notably carved stone columns from Hindu and Jain temples – from earlier Indic buildings" (Talbot 2016: 78). But recycle would normally mean salvaging from something that had been discarded. The Jain and Hindu temples were centres of worship. They had not been abandoned. Finbarr B. Flood held

that it would be incorrect to depict the uprooting of the Iron Pillar and its relocation in Delhi as "a symbol of the domination of Islam." According to him, "the appropriation and reerection of the iron pillar represented an 'indigenization' of the Islamicate present, for the object used and the practices associated with it reveal a dependence on Indic models of legitimation ..." Iltutmish's re-erection of the pillar "... had little to do with cultural rupture and everything to do with the construction of fictive continuities..."

As per this argument, Iltutmish's act implied the deployment of Indic symbols for legitimation, nothing more. Further, Flood held that Iltutmish merely followed the practice of earlier Hindu kings. He cited the case of an Ashokan pillar at Kotla Feroz Shah, which Feroz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-1388) brought from Topra Kalan in Ambala district, and erected next to his Friday mosque. The first inscription on the pillar had been inscribed in Brahmi in the third century BCE. Around sixty years before Iltutmish, in 1164 CE the Chahamana king, Vigraharaja IV inscribed on the same pillar his victory over a *Mleccha* (Ghaznavid or Ghurid) army (Flood 2009: 248-250).

But surely, inscribing an additional record on an existing pillar could not be viewed as a hostile act, whereas uprooting it from its sanctified space would certainly qualify as such.

Alexander Cunningham, who surveyed the Qutab complex in 1862-63, believed that Anangpal Tomar brought the Iron Pillar to its present location in the eleventh century. This was shown to be an erroneous reading of an inscription on the pillar (Talbot 2016: 79-80; Balasubramaniam 2008: 30). Besides the Topra Pillar from Haryana, Feroz also brought the Meerut pillar from UP, which he set up on the Delhi Ridge. Barni described the process of transportation of the massive pillars to Delhi.

3. For manufacturing the Iron Pillar at least 7,000 kg of iron would have been used and 200 furnaces operated simultaneously, or the same furnace repeatedly used, to produce that amount of iron of consistent quality (Tripathi 2008: 126-128). The genius of the creators of the Udayagiri complex was apparent in the symbolic representations of Vishnu *pada* and cosmic sleep by a skilful union of astronomical and architectural knowledge.

4. Several observers, among them Alexander Cunningham, initially believed that the Iron Pillar was made of brass. In 1876, Percy Brown of Roorkee University conducted a chemical analysis of the material used in the pillar, which revealed that it was made of pure iron (Balasubramaniam 2005: 25; Balasubramaniam 2008: 37).

5

Hallowed Land of Krishna

Mathura, Braj, Vrindavan

Mathura was early on distinguished by its association with Krishna. In the fourth century BCE, strong adherents of Vasudeva were to be found only in the Mathura region (Raychaudhuri 1975: 55). Megasthenes (350-290 BCE), Greek historian and author of *Indica*, wrote,

> This Herakles is held in special honour by the Sourasenoi, an Indian tribe who possess two large cities, Methora and Cleisobora, and through whose country flows a navigable river called the Iobares (McCrindle 1877: 201).

Over a century ago, R.G. Bhandarkar identified the two cities as Mathura and Krishnapura (the latter according to some scholars was Gokul, near Mathura) and the river as Yamuna (Bhandarkar 1913: 9). Mathura was a "seat of the Bhagavat cult from about the second century BC to fifth century A.D." (Agrawala 1965: 1; Raychaudhuri 1975: 53). It was also a flourishing centre of the Jain and Buddhist faiths.

The Mora Well inscription of Mahaksatrapa Rajuvula, of the early decades of the first century CE, found in a village seven miles from Mathura, stated that images *pratima(h)* of the blessed (*bhagavatam*) five Vrishni heroes, were installed in a stone shrine of a person called Tosa. The heroes were identified from a passage in the *Vayu Purana* as Samkarsana, Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Samba, and Aniruddha (Banerjea 1968: 12-13). The English translation of the inscription read,

> ... of the son of mahaksatrapa Ramjuvala, svami...
> the images of the holy *pancaviranam* of the Vrishnis...
> the stone shrine ... whom the magnificent matchless stone house of Tosa was erected and maintained...
> five objects of adoration made of stone, radiant as it were with the highest beauty ... (Quintanilla 2007: 260).

The Mathura inscription of the time of his son, Mahakshatrapa Sodasa recorded the erection of a *torana, vedika,* and *chatuhsala* at the *Mahasthana* (great place) of Bhagavat Vasudeva (Panda 2007: 80). Several male torsos representing the Vrisni heroes were also found in a shrine in Mora dating to the time of Mahakshatrapa Sodasa. In the reign of Chandragupta Vikramaditya, a magnificent temple of Vishnu was built at the site of Katra Keshavadeva (Agrawala 1965: 2, 11).

Panini, the Sanskrit linguist and grammarian, and Patanjali, who wrote the *Mahabhasya* on Panini's *sutras,* also mentioned Krishna's association with Mathura (Srinivasan 1997: 316). Kalidasa, hailed as the greatest poet and dramatist in Sanskrit, in the fourth-fifth century CE mentioned the groves of Vrindavan and Govardhan hill,

> "... the king of Mathura,
> Whose fame was acknowledged in song even by the devatas...
> At that moment, though still in Mathura, it appears
> As if Ganga has merged with Yamuna at the Sangam...
> In a Vrindavan garden which is superior even to
> Kubera's garden, known as Chaitra-ratha...

> You can, as well, during rains, look at the dancing peacocks, while
> Sitting in a pleasant cave of the Goverdhan Mountain" (*Raghuvamsham* 6. 45-51).

The Alvar saint, Andal visualized going to a pilgrimage which began at Mathura, then proceeded to Gokul, the Yamuna, the pool of Kaliya, Vrindavan, Govardhan, and finished at Dwarka (Hardy 1983: 424). The eleventh century Kashmiri poet, Bilhana (*Vikramankadeva Caritam* 18.87) visited Mathura and Vrindavan after leaving Kashmir *en route* to Karnataka.

MAHMUD GHAZNAVI AT MATHURA

Mathura was plundered for twenty-one days during the course of the ninth invasion of Mahmud Ghaznavi, in 1017 CE. Mahmud first attacked Mahaban, whose prince Kulchand killed himself and his family to avoid capture. From there, the invading force moved to Mathura. Al-Utbi, in his *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, detailed the havoc he wrought,

> On both sides of the city there were a thousand houses, to which idol temples were attached ... In the middle of the city there was a temple larger and firmer than the rest, which can neither be described nor painted. The Sultan thus wrote respecting it:-'If any should wish to construct a building equal to this, he would not be able to do it without expending a hundred thousand red dinars, and it would occupy two hundred years, even though the most experienced and able workmen were employed.' Among the idols there were five made of red gold, each five yards high, fixed in the air without support. In the eyes of one of these idols there were two rubies, of such value, that if anyone were to sell such as are like them, he would obtain fifty thousand dinars. On another, there was a sapphire purer than water, and more sparkling than crystal; the weight was four hundred and fifty miskals. The two feet of another idol weighed four thousand four hundred miskals, and the entire quantity of gold yielded by the bodies of these idols, was ninety-eight thousand three

> hundred miskals. The idols of silver amounted to two hundred, but they could not be weighed without breaking them to pieces and putting them into scales. The Sultan gave orders that all the temples should be burnt with naphtha and fire, and levelled with the ground (Elliot and Dowson Vol. II: 248).

GAHADAVALAS – PROTECTORS OF HINDUISM

Despite the calamity, devotees did not forsake Mathura. Alberuni, writing sometime after Mahmud's sack of the city, described it as a holy place "crowded with Brahmanas." He noted, "It is venerated because Vasudeva was there born and brought up, in a place in the neighbourhood called Nandagola" (Alberuni 1910: 147-148, 199).

In the twelfth century, the Gahadavala dynasty stood forth "as champions of Hinduism" (Niyogi 1959: 200). Bhatta Lakshmidhara, chief minister of the Gahadavala king Govindachandra (r. 1114-1155), wrote the earliest surviving collection of verses in praise of the sacred sites of Mathura, which has been described as "the first re-statement of the theory of *Tirtha-yatra*" (Aiyangar 1942: lxxxvii-lxxxviii). In his *Krtyakalpataru*, he devoted an entire section (9) to Mathura.

KATRA – KRISHNA REAPPEARS

The most important pilgrimage site in Mathura was Katra ('market place'), now referred to as Krishna Janmasthan ('the birthplace of Krishna'). Excavations at the site revealed pottery and terracotta dating to the sixth century BCE, the remains of a large Buddhist complex, including a monastery called Yasha Vihara of the Gupta period, as well as Jain sculptures of the same era.

The temple at Katra was sacked by Mahmud Ghaznavi. A temple was built to replace it in 1150 CE. The Mathura *prasasti*, dated Samvat 1207 (1150 CE), found in 1889 CE at the Keshava mound by Anton Fuhrer, German Indologist who worked with the Archaeological Survey of India, recorded the foundation of a temple dedicated to Vishnu at the Katra site,

> Jajja, who long carried the burden of the *varga*, together with a committee of trustees (*goshtijana*), built a large temple of Vishnu, brilliantly white and touching the clouds.

Jajja was a vassal of the Gahadavalas in charge of Mathura, and the committee mentioned in the *prasasti* could have been of an earlier Vaishnava temple. The *prasasti* was incised in the reign of "his glorious majesty, the supreme king of great kings..." The name of the king was unclear as a portion of the *prasasti* was damaged. It could have been Vijayapala or Ajayapala. The inscription confirmed the date of one of the temples buried under the Keshava mound (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. I: 287-289).

A Vishnu temple, the ruins of which are now called Chaurasi Khambha, was constructed at Kaman by local rulers, who called themselves Yadavas. Another Vishnu temple was built at Mahaban in the twelfth century CE by local Rajput chiefs, perhaps related to Kulchand.

Collapse of Hindu Power

Hindu power in the Doab collapsed when the troops of Muhammad Ghori defeated Jaichand, the last Gahadavala king. All Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu shrines in and around Mathura were destroyed. Buddhism never recovered from the assault, and for the next four centuries any Jain or Hindu shrine constructed, was demolished. The memory of those temples and their transformation into mosques was preserved in oral traditions, and in the many modest shrines built for sculptural fragments of earlier structures (Entwistle 1987: 122-124).[1]

Krishna Temple Destroyed

The temple built by Jajja at Katra was destroyed by the forces of Qutubuddin Aibak, though Feroz Tughlaq (r. 1351-88) was also said to have attacked it. It was repaired and survived till the reign of Sikandar Lodi (r.1489-1517). Ferishta recorded that Sikandar Lodi was a staunch Muslim, with a passion for vandalizing heathen temples,

> He was firmly attached to the Mahomedan religion, and made a point of destroying all Hindoo temples. In the city of Mutra he caused musjids and bazaars to be built opposite the bathing-stairs leading to the river, and ordered that no Hindoo should be allowed to bathe there. He forbade the barbers to shave the beards and heads of the inhabitants, in order to prevent the Hindoos following their usual practices at such places (Ferishta Vol. 1 1908: 586).

Abdullah (writing in the time of Jahangir) in his *Tarikh-i-Daudi* said of Sikandar Lodi,

> He was so zealous a Mussalman that he utterly destroyed many places of worship of the infidels, and left not a single vestige remaining of them. He utterly ruined the shrines of Mathura, that mine of heathenism, and turned their principal temples into *saraes* (*sarais*, rest-houses) and colleges. Their stone images were given to the butchers to serve them as meat-weights, and all the Hindus of Mathura were strictly prohibited from shaving their heads and beards, and performing their ablutions. He thus put an end to all the idolatrous rites of the infidels there; and no Hindu, if he wished to have his head or beard shaved, could get a barber to do it (Elliot and Dowson Vol. 4: 447).

KRISHNA DEVOTEES ARRIVE AT BRAJ

Despite the hostile circumstances, Krishna devotees continued to flock to the Braj region. Nimbarka (Bhaskara), a Brahmin from Andhra who probably lived in the thirteenth century and propounded the Vaishnava doctrine of *bhedabheda dvaitadvaita* (duality in unity), took up residence first at Dhruv Tila in Mathura, and then proceeded to Nimgaon, near Govardhan. The temple of Sudarshan at Nimgaon had a statue of Nimbarka.

Madhavendra Puri, a Tailanga Brahmin and *acharya* of the Madhva *sampradaya*, who probably lived from around 1420 to 1490, was credited with installing an image of Krishna at Govardhan (Shyamdas 2004: 55-57). He later travelled to Puri where Mahaprabhu Chaitanya became his disciple (Vaudeville 2005a: 128, 136-139).

Vallabha and Chaitanya also arrived in the Braj region, in search of sacred places that had been destroyed or lost. Vallabha (1479-1531) belonged to a family of Telugu Brahmins that had been Krishna devotees for generations. His mother was the daughter of a priestly family that served the Vijayanagara rulers (Barz 1976: 20-28). In the *Shrikrsnashrayah*, that formed part of his *Sodashagrantha*, Vallabha said of his age,

> The *Mlecchas* have surrounded all the holy places with the result that they have become infected with evil. Besides, the holy people are full of sorrow. At such a time Krishna alone is my Way... (Barz 1976: 16).

According to tradition, in 1493, when Vallabha was at Jharkhand, Sri Govardhannathji ordered him,

> As you know well, I am present in a cave of Sri Giriraj under my essential form (svarupa) of 'Sri Govardhanadhara.' None but the Brajvasis who live over there had a vision of Myself. Now I intend to make myself manifest to all but, for that purpose, I have been waiting for you. So now you must go quickly to establish my cult (*seva*) over there. The people who were living there at the time of the *Krsna-avatara* have come back to the Braj country. Do take them under your protection and make them my 'servants'(*sevaka*) and I Myself will play with them, so that, besides the dignity of being Sri Hari's slaves they will also obtain the favour of my own presence (Vaudeville 2005a: 111).

As directed, Vallabha went to Braj and established the *svarupa* under its true name, Sri Govardhannathji. A rough shelter was erected over the *svarupa*, and a person appointed to perform simple *seva* (Shyamdas 2004: 47). Sri Govardhannathji also revealed to Vallabha the *Brahmasambandha mantra*, the sacred chant to initiate disciples to his *sampradaya* (the Pushtimarga). In 1520, the construction of a temple for Sri Govardhannathji was completed. In the lifetime of Vallabha, and his sons Gopinath and Vitthalnath, that was the principal shrine of the *sampradaya* (Barz 1976: 28-29).

Vallabhacharya's descendants from the seven sons of his second son, Vitthalnath Gosain, had a special status in the *sampradaya* as each was given an image of divine origin, from the nine treasures (*navnidhis*) he had obtained in his lifetime. Vallabhacharya gave them to Vitthalnath Gosain, who in turn distributed them among his seven sons. These eight major stem lineages, known as *gaddis* or *pithas* (seats), were ranked according to their seniority of descent from Vallabhacharya. Vitthalnath's eldest son Giridhar (and his descendants), had the highest spiritual status, as he had the original *svarupa* of Sri Govardhannathji (usually called Sri Nathji). The image of Sri Nathji was the most revered, as it was believed to contain all the attributes of the other seven deities (Barz 1976: 41-42; Peabody 2003: 58).[2]

Around the same time as the Pushtimarga, the Gaudiya *sampradaya* associated with Mahaprabhu Chaitanya (1485-1533) also took roots. The *Caitanya Caritamrta* stated that Chaitanya sent two of his most famous disciples, Rupa and Sanatan, to locate the holy spots and images in Braj that were missing or "hidden" for centuries (*Caitanya Caritamrta* 1999: 20-21). The *Mathura Katha* of Pulin Bihari Das said that Rupa and Sanatan spent fifteen years in Braj, recovering the lost *lila-sthalas*. Chaitanya, on his arrival in Braj in the year 1516 CE, identified the lost Radha *kund (Caitanya Caritamrta* 1999: 596-597).[3]

KESHAV TEMPLE IN THE TIME OF AKBAR

Though vandalized in the Sultanate period, the Keshav temple seemed to have been adequately restored to serve as a place of worship by the time of Akbar's reign (1556-1605). The Portuguese, Father Antonio Monserrate (1536-1600), one of the Jesuits at the Mughal court, visited Mathura in 1580-82, and noted that all temples built at sites associated with the deeds of Krishna were in ruins,

> ... *only* one Hindu temple is left out of many; for the Musalmans have completely destroyed all except the pyramids. Huge crowds of pilgrims come from all over India to this temple, which is situated on the high bank of the Jomains (Monserrate 1922: 93).

Father Monserrate reported that pilgrims to the Krishna temple had to first go to the river-side and shave off their hair and beards before being permitted to enter the temple,

> The Brachmanae do not allow these pilgrims to enter the temple till they have been to the river-side and shaved off their hair and beards in the case of men and their hair and eye-brows in the case of women; then they must dip themselves several times into the river, that the water may wash away their sins: for the Brachmanae promise forgiveness of all sins to those who have bathed in this water. It is an extraordinary sight; for there are more than three hundred barbers, who very swiftly shave a huge multitude both of men and women standing up to their waists in the river, on steps which have been built there. The sexes are mixed together; but all is done with perfect modesty. For the cunning of the Evil One is such that he has put a false idea of religion into their minds: so that they regard it as a heinous offence to do anything foul or immodest in such a sacred place (as they regard it) (Monserrate 1922: 93).

KESHAVA TEMPLE REBUILT

The Keshavadeva temple was rebuilt in the reign of Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) by the Bundela ruler, Bir Singh Deo, at a cost of thirty-three lakh rupees, when gold was priced at Rs. 10/- per *tola*. A grand structure, it was regarded a "wonder of the age" (Sarkar Vol. III 1921: 266). The *Anandakanda-campu*, credited to Bir Singh's poet Mitra Misra, retold the story of Keshavadeva. In its last chapter, the sage Narada expressed grief at the state of the earth after Keshava's departure. Brahma comforted him, prophesizing that Bir Singh would come and rectify the situation, and then described the beauty of the Keshava temple at Mathura (Pauwels 2011: 228).

Shaikh Farid Bhakkari wrote of Bir Singh's temple,

> He constructed such an idol-house (*deorha*) in Mathura as will endure till the time of Resurrection. About ten lakh rupees have been spent on it. He had constructed in his native state a tank, forts and lofty edifices. A number of times he seated himself to weigh against gold, and once gave in charity one thousand coins with one thousand silver ewers (*lotas*) to Brahmins (*Dhakhiratul Khawanin* 2003: 134).

Francois Bernier saw the temple in 1663,

> Between Dehli and Agra, a distance of fifty or sixty leagues, there are no fine towns such as travellers pass through in France; the whole road is cheerless and uninteresting; nothing is worthy of observation but Maturas (Mathura), where an ancient and magnificent temple of idols is still to be seen (Bernier 1916: 284).

The French merchant, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-1689) described it in 1650,

> ... It is one of the most sumptuous buildings in all India ... Although this pagoda, which is very large, is in a hollow, one sees it from more than 5 or 6 coss distance, the building being very elevated and very magnificent ... (Tavernier 1889: 240-243).

The Central Asian traveller, Mahmud Balkhi who travelled across north India from 1624 and 1631, wrote of 'the temple of Lala Bir Singh,' and the huge numbers who visited it,

> Outside this grand and matchless building are a school, a worship house, an inn, about 80 houses in all, fully occupied and engaged. Although the worship was coming to an end, the men and women were dispersing, nearly thirty thousand men and women together and close (to each other) were present on that unique place. Orators, reciters of holy books, dominis, and all the administrators of affairs and others were present. Everyone stayed with their respective guides. Due to the large crowd and the ecstasy due to religious songs, it was difficult to keep one's bearing there (O'Hanlon 2011: 196).

ENTER AURANGZEB

The Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707) first intervened in the affairs of the region in 1665, when he prohibited celebrations of Holi and Diwali, and cremation of the dead on the banks of the Yamuna. The Italian traveller, Niccolao Manucci (1638-1717) noted the ban on Holi, "He hindered the Hindus from enjoying their merry-making or carnival ... The time of this festival or carnival falls ordinarily on the moon of March" (Manucci Vol. II 1907: 154).

A year later, on 14th October 1666, Aurangzeb ordered the removal of the stone railing prince Dara had presented to the Keshava temple, as it was "a scandalous example of a Muslim's coquetry with idolatry" (Sarkar Vol. III 1921: 267). The railing was made of wood, which had decayed, and Dara had replaced it with one of stone (Sharma 1940: 170).

In 1669, Aurangzeb issued a general order for the demolition of Hindu schools and temples, and in 1670, specifically ordered the destruction of the Keshavadeva temple.[4] Saqi Mustaid Khan recorded,

> "On Thursday, 27th January/15 Ramzan (27 January 1670) ... the Emperor as the promoter of justice and overthrower of mischief, as a knower of truth and destroyer of oppression, as the zephyr of the garden of victory and the reviver of the faith of the Prophet, issued orders for the demolition of the temple situated in Mathura, famous as the Dehra of Kesho Rai. In a short time by the great exertions of his officers, the destruction of this strong foundation of infidelity was accomplished and on its site a lofty mosque was built by the expenditure of a large sum... Praised be the august God of the faith of Islam, that in the auspicious reign of this destroyer of infidelity and turbulence, such a wonderful and seemingly impossible work was successfully accomplished.
>
> On seeing this instance of the strength of the emperor's faith and the grandeur of his devotion to God, the proud Rajas were stifled, and in amazement they stood like images facing the wall. The idols, large and small, set with costly jewels, which had been set up in the temple, were brought to Agra, and buried under the steps of the mosque of the Begum Sahib in order to be continuously trodden upon. The name of Mathura was changed to Islamabad (Saqi Mustaid Khan 1947: 60).

Manucci described the event,

> ... the great temple of Matora (Mathura), which was of such a height that its gilded pinnacle could be seen from Agrah, eighteen leagues away. In its place a mosque was to be erected, to which he gave the name of Essalamabad (Islamabad) – that is, 'built by the faithful'... (Manucci Vol. II 1907: 154).

F.S. Growse, Collector and District Magistrate of Mathura, subsequently wrote,

> ... during the fast of Ramazan ... Aurangzeb had descended in person on Mathura. The temple specially marked out for destruction, was one built so recently, in the reign of

> Jahangir, at a cost of 33 lakhs by Bir Singh Deva, the Bundela, of Urcha. Beyond all doubt this was the last of the famous shrines of Kesava Deva ...The mosque erected on its ruins is a building of little architectural value but the natural advantage of its lofty and isolated position render it a striking feature in the landscape (Growse 1874: 37, 126).

An Idgah was built at the site of the temple (Sarkar Vol. III 1921: 281-2; Sharma 1940: 172). Alexander Cunningham, who visited Mathura several times, noted,

> ... there can be little doubt that the great temple of Kesava had stood on this site (Katra) from a very early date, although often thrown down and as often renewed (Cunningham 1969: 31).

In his second report of 1862-63, Cunningham wrote that inscriptions reused as pavement slabs in the mosque showed that the temple was still standing in the year 1663. He verified the charge against Aurangzeb,

> ...by means of some inscriptions on the pavement slabs, which were recorded by Hindu pilgrims to the shrine of Kesava Ray. In relaying the pavement the Muhammadan architect was obliged to cut many of the slabs to make them fit into their new places. This was proved by several slabs bearing incomplete portions of Nagari inscriptions of a late date. One slab has '... vat. 1713, Phalgun,' the initial Sam of Samvat having been cut off. Another slab has the name of Keso Ray, the rest being wanting, while a third bears the date of Samvat 1720. These dates are equivalent to AD 1656 and 1663; and, as the latter is five years subsequent to the accession of Aurangzeb, it is certain that the Hindu temple was still standing at the beginning of his reign (Cunningham 1885: 39).

According to Vijay (*Braj bhumi mohini*, Vrindaban, Svami Sriram Sarma, Ramesvar Sadan, 1985), the deity of the Keshavadeva temple was taken to village Rasdhan in Kanpur District (Entwistle 1987: 180-81).

Brajnath's *Sri Braj Parikrama* suggested that worship at the site resumed at some stage. There was also a reference to the pilgrimage of Datiya king Parichat, in 1822 in *Braj Bhumi Prakas* by Naval Singh Pradhan. It described the visit of the king,

> A new dwelling place had been made, two Siva temples and a Siva pond,
> Having seen them, he took *darsana* of the meritorious grand Kesavadeva.
> He has a special crown (*kirita mukuta*) on the head, resplendent with a beautiful forehead mark (tilaka).
> His special chest-jewel (*kaustubha mani*), and Vaijayanti garland are gorgeous,
> Dark hairlocks and curls, in his ears earrings shaped like magic creatures (*makara*),
> His limbs shine with the colour of a deep sapphire, Indra's jewel in marvellous ways.
> In his arms he carries the shell, disc, mace and lotus; his yellow cloth and sash shine.
> Thus, taking in the auspicious sight of Kesavadeva's true form, heaps of sins are destroyed.
> Worshipping him with costly gifts, bowing his head,
> The king stood taking in *darsana* of Vishnu for a long time.

The detailed account indicated that the image was similar to the one Aurangzeb had taken away (Pauwels 2011: 235-236). Or was it a mere visualization of an image and shrine that no longer existed?

TEMPLE REBUILT IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

After the decline of the Mughals, the site became a subject of legal disputes. In 1815, the East India Company auctioned the area of Katra Keshavadeva, which was purchased by Raja Patnimal of Banaras. He could not build the temple, as he was embroiled in legal battles over ownership of the land with Muslims of Banaras. Eventually, the judiciary ruled in favour of the heirs of Raja Patnimal. In 1944, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, dismayed at the conditions at the site, arranged for acquisition of the land. Jugal Kishore Birla formed a trust to which the land rights were transferred. The Krishna temple was completed in 1965 (Pl. 16).

TEMPLES IN VRINDAVAN

THE TEMPLE OF GOVINDADEVA

On their arrival at Vrindavan, the followers of Chaitanya first erected a shrine in honour of Vrinda Devi. No trace of it survives. Rupa then built a temple for the image of Govindadeva that became manifest at the ancient site of Yogapitha (Gomatila, the hill of Goma). A handwritten manuscript in the *Khas Muhar* collection in the Jaipur *Pothikhana* stated,

> Sri Govindadeva ji became manifest in Samvat 1592 (1535 CE). Sri Rupa Gosvami had a dream on the eleventh day (*ekadasi*) in the bright fortnight of Jyestha; the ritual bath (*abhiseka,* marking the establishment of the image) took place on the fifth day of the bright fortnight in Magha (Bahura 1996: 199).

After performing *abhisheka,* Rupa installed the image on an earthen platform at Gomatila and commenced worship. In his *Sri Mathura Mahatmya,* Rupa said,

> Text 155
> What heart, seeing the Deity of Lord Hari, who resides on Govardhan Hill, in the western part of the lotus, and who is the master of the demigods, will remain unhappy?
>
> Text 156
> A person who sees the handsome Deity of Lord Govinda in the northern part of this lotus will not fall into the ocean of repeated birth and death (*Sri Mathura Mahatmya).*

Rupa soon built a permanent temple of red sandstone, the ruins of which can be seen in the northwest corner of the Govindadeva temple mound. The saint, Mirabai (1498-1546) had *darshan* of the deity when she visited Vrindavan in 1538-1539 CE on her way to Dwarka,

> O body! I am fascinated by Vrndavana where, in every house, tulasi is planted and Thakurji (Krsna) is worshipped, and regular darsana of Sri Govindadevaji is available (Nath 1996: 162).

Bhatta Narayana's *Sri Vraja Bhakti Vilasa* (1552 CE), the earliest authoritative source of the Braj *mandal parikrama* also mentioned "Sri Govinda *darsana*" at Vrindavan. The deity was worshipped in that red sandstone temple from 1535 to 1590.

The Vaishnava saints who settled in the area were noticed by Akbar, and Raja Man Singh, who accompanied the Emperor on his visit to Vrindavan in 1570. On seeing Govindadeva, the Lord of Gokul installed in a small temple, Man Singh vowed to construct a suitable shrine for the deity.

Work on Man Singh's temple commenced in 1576 and was completed in 1590,[5] as attested by several inscriptions on the temple walls (Pl. 17). The temple comprised of a gigantic *mulaprasada* (shrine proper), that was probably surmounted by a grand *mahameru sikhara;* the subsidiary shrines of Yogamaya on the south and Vrinda Devi on the north, were probably crowned by *nagara shikharas*. There was also a well-planned *antarala* (antechamber) with a vaulted ceiling (Nath 1996: 163).

The first image instated in the temple was of Govindadeva that Rupa Gosain had obtained/discovered in 1535 CE. The second was a *murti* of Krishna, in the *tribhanga* posture, sent by Mahaprabhu Chaitanya through Kasisvara Pandita, with the message: "This image is identical with me." The third was the image of Sri Radha, offered to Govindadeva in 1633 CE, by the king of Udisa, Purusottama Deva (Bahura 1996: 206). Images of Vrinda Devi and Yogamaya were installed in attached shrines. Govindadeva was worshipped at that temple from 1590 to 1669.

Aurangzeb's order of 1669 led to a mass exodus of deities from the region.[6] Most of them were taken to Rajasthan, where they were assured protection.[7] Their journey from the Mathura region is detailed in a subsequent chapter.

PILGRIMAGE CONTINUED IN BRAJ

Despite the departure of deities, devotional activity in Braj did not come to a complete halt. A few priests of the Govindadeva temple returned in 1675 to repossess land that had been unlawfully seized when the shrine was abandoned. Documents with the Kacchavahas of Amer confirmed that by 1700 worship at the Govindadeva temple in Vrindavan had resumed, with a substitute image in the *garbhagriha* (Horstmann 1996: 186-187).

SAWAI JAI SINGH

The Amer ruler, Sawai Jai Singh (r. 1700-1743) availed the opportunity provided by Mughal decline following the death of Aurangzeb to buttress the Hindu position (Okita 2014: 32-33). He used his standing at the Mughal court to seek redress for Hindu grievances. The *jizya,* abolished by Emperor Farrukh Siyar in January 1713, had been re-imposed in April 1717. In a letter to Jai Singh explaining the reasons for the reversal in imperial policy, the Emperor stated, "Inayetullah (the new diwan and former secretary of Aurangzeb) has placed before me a letter from the Sheriff of Mecca urging that the collection of *jizya* is obligatory according to our Holy Book. In a matter of faith, I am powerless (to intervene)." Jai Singh successfully pleaded against the tax with Emperor Muhammad Shah (Chandra 2003: 350-353). In 1728, at his urging, the Emperor abolished the tax on pilgrims at Gaya. In 1730, again on his intervention, the long-standing tax levied on Hindus at certain bathing sites was withdrawn (Sarkar 1984: 224-226).

Jai Singh strove to improve conditions for pilgrims in Hindu sacred cities. In 1733, he secured the *faujdari* of Gaya in addition to that he held of Mathura, which enabled him to contribute to the betterment of holy sites in the regions (Bhatnagar 1974: 340-341). He founded several small, fortified townships or localities, called *Jaisinghpuras*, in the provinces where he was posted; at Kabul, Peshawar, Multan, Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Patna, Burhanpur, Aurangabad, and Ellichpur. He also purchased land and established *Jaisinghpuras* at almost all important Hindu religious centres in north India; Mathura, Vrindavan, Kashi-Banaras, Prayag-Allahabad, Ujjain, and Ayodhya, in a bid to restore Hindu *dharma* (Bhatt 2005: 145; Nath 2004).

According to his biographer Atmaram, when Jai Singh was in Braj during the campaign against Churaman Jat, he bathed at Radha *kund* on the full moon of Kartik, went to Mathura in the month of Shravan in 1724, and performed the marriage of his daughter on *Janmashtami*. He then undertook a tour of the sacred forests of Braj, and, on his return to Mathura, founded religious establishments, and celebrated Holi. In 1727, he again visited Braj and offered his weight in gold at Vishram Ghat. He constructed some *ghats* at Vrindavan, and built a temple of Sitaram on Vishram Ghat in 1732. Four years later, he constructed another temple at Govardhan, dedicated to Govardhannath (Roy 1978: 228-229).

PILGRIMAGE BY FAMILY OF PESHWA

During the period of Maratha expansion, pilgrimage to holy places in the north became frequent. The constant movement of Maratha troops afforded pilgrims the requisite protection. The Peshwa's mother, Kashitai performed pilgrimage for four years in the north, visiting Mathura, Prayag, Ayodhya, Banaras, and other holy places, during which Jai Singh ensured her safe passage (Sardesai Vol. II 1946: 243).

NOTES

1. Hindus and Jains continued to observe their religious customs discretely in Mathura on payment of a pilgrimage tax.

Jinaprabhasuri Suri, in his *Vividtirthakalpa* (*Mathurapurikalpa*), described Mathura as twelve by nine *yojanas* in extent. He documented that he "restored the holy place of Mahura" (Shinohara and Granoff 2006: 16). The remains of a Jain temple were discovered at Sahar with inscriptions dated 1371-72 CE (Entwistle 1987: 134-135).

2. Akbar granted several favours to Vitthal. When Akbar directed him to seek a royal favour, Vitthal asked for the grant of Gokul, which he had decided to make his permanent residence. Akbar bestowed it on him by a *farman*, dated 13th September 1577. The *farman* was not the grant of the village; it was an Imperial command by Akbar directing his officers to allow Vitthal to live peacefully at Gokul, and not demand any taxes etc., from him, his relatives, or retainers. "They must allow him to live in his place and home, easy at heart, so that he might engage himself in praying for our daily increasing fortune and the perpetuity of our eternity allied dignity" (Jhaveri 1928: *Farman* 1). In another *farman*, dated 9th March 1581, the Emperor ordered Government officials, "At this time we have ordered that the cows of the indisputable prayer-offerer (well-wisher) Vithalrai, wearer of the sacred thread (Brahmin), wherever they are, should be allowed to graze. In *Khalsa* or *Jagir* (lands), no one should injure or obstruct them in the least..." (Jhaveri 1928: *Farman* II). In what has been described as a rare instance, the Emperor's mother, Hamida Banu Begam, reiterated the order to officers of the pargana of Mahaban, "They must permit his cows to graze (wherever they are)" (Jhaveri 1928: *Farman* III).
3. Vallabha and his successors were primarily devoted to the child Krishna, and advocated a type of bhakti known as *vatsalya*. They focused on Gokul-Mahaban and Govardhan, where their main temples were established. Chaitanya and his followers, were devotees of the cult of the divine couple Radha-Krishna, and advocated the *madhurya* type of bhakti. They re-sacralised Vrindavan, where the Nimbarkites, who viewed Radha as the supreme divinity, were also gathering (Vaudeville 2005: 57-58).
4. Some scholars have made much of the fact that temples built in Vrindavan in the 16th-17th centuries were of the same red

sandstone used in the construction of Mughal forts at Agra and Delhi. Bir Singh Deo's temple at Mathura was also built of red sandstone. According to them, "This symbolizes nicely how Braj bhakti was literally built with the same material as the empire or implicated strongly in the Mughal imperial formation"(Pauwels 2011: 224-225). While discussing the temple at Mathura, the scholar repeatedly stated, "none of these sources specifies that the temple in Mathura was a Janmabhumi temple" (Pauwels 2011: 227, 232). The purported focus of her study was the temple of Kesavadeva at Mathura and of Caturbhujadeva at Orccha. Was the antiquity of the Janmabhumi temple also under examination even if not explicitly stated, or was that added as an aside? Does that say anything about the neutrality of the scholar?

5. Other temples built included those of Gopinath, Jugal Kishor, Madan Mohan, Radha Damodar, and Radha Ballabh. The original image of the Madan Mohan temple was taken to Karauli, where Raja Gopal Singh, who reigned from 1725 to 1757, built a shrine for it. A new temple of Gopinath was built in 1821 by a Bengali Kayastha, Nand Kumar Ghose, who also constructed a new Madan Mohan shrine. The Radha Ballabh temple was repaired by Growse. The temple of Radha Damodar had a special claim to distinction as it contained the ashes of Jiva, its founder, and his two uncles, Rupa and Sanatana, who in their life-time had expressed a wish to buried together in its precincts (Growse 1979: 252-257).

   Akbar made several revenue grants to temples in Mathura and its environs. The earliest surviving grant was in January 1565. After 1580, no imperial grants were made to any temple in Mathura for eighteen years. A *farman* of 1598, recorded grants to thirty-five temples in Mathura and its environs, totalling 500 bighas *ilahi*, half in cultivated land and half in wasteland. In all, grants to temples and temple-servants totalled 1000 *bighas* of land to thirty-five temples in Vrindavan, Mathura, and its environs. The temples were set in seven groups, and a separate *farman* was issued for each (Mukherjee and Habib 1988: 234-248).

   Akbar had a special relationship with the Kacchavahas of Amber, beginning with Raja Bharmal, who joined Mughal service along with his son, Bhagwant Das, and grandson, Man Singh. In 1593-94, when the *Ain-i-Akbari's* list of *mansabdars* was drawn up, 13 of the 27 Rajputs mentioned therein were Kacchavahas, variously related to the Amber house (Chandra 2003: 392).

6. Growse described the Govindadeva temple as "not only the finest of this particular series, but is the most impressive religious edifice that Hindu art has ever produced, at least in Upper India" (Growse 1874: 241). He said that consequent to Aurangzeb's order, the temple's sanctum was "utterly razed to the ground," the chapel towers never completed, and that over the choir lost several of its upper quarters. All that had given the structure a stunted appearance. A plain masonry wall that had been constructed along the top of the central dome, had further added to the deformity. The wall was believed to have been erected by Aurangzeb to desecrate the temple, though some hold it was built by the Hindus themselves to assist in some grand illumination.

   Growse ordered the removal of the wall, and cleared the debris around the building before handing it back to the Hindus (Growse 1874: 243-245). According to Growse, the sanctum was roughly rebuilt in brick in 1854, and contained an image of Krishna as Giridhar, with two subordinate figures, representing Mahaprabhu Chaitanya and Nityananda.
7. Some scholars claimed that Aurangzeb destroyed the Keshavadeva temple in retaliation for the Jat rebellion. But Jats were not the builders of the temple. Also, the demolition of the temple failed to quell the uprising. The people of the region had long been victims of the highhandedness of Mughal *faujdars* at Mathura. Murshid Quli Khan Turkman repeatedly harassed Hindu women. Abdunnabi Khan built a mosque (the Jama Masjid) in the centre of Mathura on the site of a Hindu temple (Sarkar Vol. III: 291-293; Goel Vol. II 1991: 83-84).

   According to Irfan Habib, the Jat rebellion "had no connexion with any particular religious movement" (Habib 2003: 393). He mentioned the high revenue demand as a factor that fuelled the Jat unrest. Under the leadership of Gokula, other local communities like the Meenas and Gujjars, joined the Jats.

Gokula was captured after a grim battle. In January 1670, on his refusal to embrace Islam, his limbs were hacked off, and his son and daughter forcibly converted to Islam (Dwivedi 1989: 29-31). That did not stem the uprising. The Jats resumed their rebellion under Raja Ram and Ram Chehra, zamindars of Sansani and Soghar, even pillaging Akbar's mausoleum at Sikandra. In 1688, Aurangzeb appointed prince Bedar Bakht to "...raze their villages and to extirpate once and forever this malicious race and plague of public tranquillity." Raja Ram was killed and Ram Chehra taken prisoner. He was beheaded at Agra and "publicly exposed at the largest gate, in front of the fortress and at the *bazaar*" (Wendel 1991: 14-15). The death of Aurangzeb, and the succession disputes among his sons, gave the Jats an opportunity to recoup their strength. Under Churaman (1695-1721), they continued to raid the main route from Delhi to Agra. Their stronghold was, however, attacked in 1716-1718, and Churaman killed. Under Badan Singh (1721-1756), "the new raja of Birj," the Jats emerged more powerful than ever before. Besides a great number of foot soldiers, Badan Singh collected a considerable cavalry, a part of which he deployed on the Delhi-Agra route, and a part in extending the area of his jurisdiction. Dig, Kumbhir, Bharatpur, Wair were also fortified for future struggle. Jat power attained new heights under Suraj Mal.

It was also difficult to accept that Aurangzeb's order on demolition of temples was provoked by the Bundela rebellion. There was no Bundela unrest in 1670, when the temple was destroyed. The first Bundela rebellion led by Jujhar Singh had been crushed in 1635, in the reign of Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658). Jujhar Singh's two sons and a grandson were converted to Islam, one son who refused to convert was killed, and the ladies of his household sent to the Mughal harem. Jujhar Singh was driven to the jungles, caught by a party of Gonds, and killed. The second rebellion ended with the death of Champat Rai, in 1661. Champat Rai's son, Chhatrasal, who had joined the Mughal army against the Marathas, returned to the north only in 1671 (Kolff 1990: 141-143; Richards 1993: 130; Goel 1991: 83).

Some scholars reiterate that temple destruction was "a statement of reassertion of Mughal imperial power against its recalcitrant vassals." Further, "Far from posing a threat to Hinduism, Mughal rule seems here to have helped solidify and extend what became 'mainstream' Hindu religiosity in north India by the eighteenth century, particularly via the institutionalization of Vaishnava religiosity in grand temples" (Pauwels 2011: 237-238).

How would that account for the destruction of the Bindu Madhava temple, the most important Vishnu temple in Varanasi since the 5th century CE, by Aurangzeb? And could "recalcitrant vassals" be identified in every case of temple destruction?

6

Kashi and Ayodhya

KASHI – CITY OF LIGHT

Mentioned in Vedic, Epic, Puranic, Buddhist, and Jain literature, Kashi was a substantial settlement by the ninth century BCE (Vidyarthi 1979: 25-26). Excavations at Rajghat Plateau traced the earliest habitation at the site to the eighth century BCE. Kashi's sanctity as a sacred centre drew countless seers and pilgrims down the ages. It was to Banaras that the Buddha went after his enlightenment, to deliver his first sermon at the Deer Park in Sarnath. Mahavira also traversed there in the course of his wanderings as a spiritual teacher. Jain association with Varanasi, however, predated Mahavira. Jain tradition held that Suparshva, the seventh *tirthankara*, and Parasnath, the twenty-third, were both born in the city.

The first seals with Shaivite emblems found in Varanasi dated to the early CE. The *Tirthayatra parvan* of the *Mahabharata* mentioned a Shiva sanctuary, Vrsadhvaja with an annexe bathing pool (Kapilahrada) at the edge of Varanasi. A variety of seals were found from the fourth to sixth centuries CE, mostly issued by Shaivite shrines, particularly of Avimuktesvara (Bakker 1996: 33-34).

Vaishnavism was also well represented in Varanasi. Among the sculptural remnants recovered was a first century BCE image of Balarama, who became recognized as Krishna's elder brother. The finds included a small sixth-century image of baby Krishna stealing butter (Eck 2015: 66). The existence of a magnificent Vishnu temple was apparent with the recovery of a Gupta period image of Krishna holding aloft Mt. Govardhan, near Bakaria Kund. Many seals bearing Vaishnavite personal names in Gupta characters were found in the Rajghat area. One seal depicted the replica of a Vaishnava temple of the Gupta period. The Sarnath Stone Inscription of Prakataditya, of the late seventh century, recorded his construction of a temple for Vishnu, under the name Muradvis, and provisions for its repairs (Shastri 1975: 73-74).

Hiuen Tsang, who visited Banaras in the seventh century, recorded that it housed a hundred or so Deva temples, around thirty *sangharamas,* and three thousand priests. In the capital there were twenty Deva temples, "the towers and halls of which are of sculptured stone and carved wood" (Beal 1884: Part II Book VII: 44-45). The *Vividtirthakalpa* of Jinaprabhasuri listed Varanasi among Jain holy sites.

BANARAS ATTACKED

Banaras experienced its first Muslim attack in 1033 CE, when troops of Ahmad Nialtagin, son of Mahmud Ghaznavi, suddenly appeared before the city. Nialtagin came to plunder and was in the city for a few hours. Abul Fazl al-Baihaki (995-1077) described the incursion,

> The army could only remain there from morning to mid-day prayer because of the peril. The markets of the drapers, perfumers, and jewellers, were plundered, but it was impossible to do more. The people of the army became rich, for they all carried off gold, silver, perfumes and jewels, and got back in safety (Elliot and Dowson Vol. II: 124).

Hindu sanctuaries were desecrated, but the mutilation was limited at that point. The following year, Mahmud Ghaznavi's nephew, Salar Masud on way to Bahraich, dispatched a portion of his army under Malik Afzal Alavi, towards Varanasi. The invading force reached the city boundary, where it was wholly wiped out in a fierce battle. At the battle site later stood the Masjid-i-Ganj-i-Shahidan. The women and children who accompanied the troops were permitted to settle in the forest area north of the town (named Alavi-pura, after the leader of the campaign, it survives to the present day).

As a counter to the Islamic challenge, towards the close of the eleventh century the Gahadavalas shifted the seat of their power from the imperial city of Kanauj to the religious centre of Varanasi. They even levied the 'Turks' tax' (*turuskadanda*), to meet the costs of maintaining a huge standing army to meet the new danger (Niyogi 1959: 180-181, 189). In their first known inscriptions, the Gahadavalas declared themselves "protectors of the (north) Indian holy places (*tirtha*) ..." (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XIV: 197).

TEMPLES REBUILT

Six copper plates issued by Chandradeva (r. 1089-1103), first king of the Gahadavala dynasty, in the years vs 1150 and 1156 (1090-1091–1098-1099), were found at Chandravati, Banaras (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XIV: 192-196). The inscription of vs 1156 stated that Chandradeva set up an image of Adi Keshava and adorned it with gold and jewels. Another inscription of the same king recorded that after a munificent gift of gold and other valuables equal to the king's weight, and a thousand cows to the image of Adi Keshava, a village was granted for the maintenance of the shrine of Chandra Mahadeva (Niyogi 1959: 195).

The twenty-six *shloka* long Sarnath inscription of Kumara Devi, queen of Govindachandra Gahadavala (r. 1114-1155), discovered by Alexander Cunningham near Dhamek stupa in

1908, mentioned a new *vihara* she had constructed. It stated that Kumara Devi restored the "Lord of the Turning of the Wheel," *Dharmachakra Jina* ("in accordance with the form in which it existed in the time of Dharmasoka, the ruler of men"), at the request of Jambuki, "foremost of the *pattalikas*". The Jina was instated in the *vihara* (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. IX: 319-328; Bhattacharya 1924: 175).

ATTACKS RESUMED

In 1194 CE, Qutubuddin Aibak, military commander of Muhammad Ghori, led a force that devastated Banaras. Hardly a shrine survived the offensive (Lannoy 1999: 568-569). Hasan Nizami claimed that over a thousand temples were ravaged,

> ... the royal army proceeded towards Benares, 'which is in the centre of the country of Hind,' and here they destroyed nearly one thousand temples, and raised mosques on their foundations; and the knowledge of the law became promulgated, and the foundations of religion were established; 'and the face of the dinar and the diram was adorned with the name and blessed titles' of the king. The Rais and chiefs of Hind came forward to proffer their allegiance. 'The government of that country was bestowed on one of the most celebrated and exalted servants of the State,' in order that he might distribute justice and repress idolatry (Elliot and Dowson Vol. II: 223-224).

TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION RESUMED: A PILLAR OF VICTORY

Aibak's blitz did not appear to have served as a deterrent for long. An inscription, dated 1212 CE, recorded the erection of a sacrificial post and a pillar of victory at the centre of Varanasi, designated the holy field (*kshetra*) of Shiva Visveshvara, the 'Lord of All,' by a Sena king of Bengal, named Visvarupa. He perhaps lacked the resources and time to construct a larger structure like a temple (Bakker 1996: 39-42).[1]

PADMESVARA TEMPLE

Early in the fourteenth century, two grand temples were built in Varanasi – Padmesvara near the Visveshvara temple, and Manikarnikesvara at Manikarnika ghat. The Padmesvara inscription of 1353 CE recorded the construction of the Padmesvara (Vishnu) temple on the north-side entrance of the Visveshvara temple at Kashi by Padma Sadhu. The inscription recorded,

> Om! Glory be to Ganapati. In Ayodhya lived formerly Sadhesadhu, the speaker of truth, beloved of good men, whose delight consisted in the welfare of all beings. His son was the famous Sadhunidhi, whose son Padmasadhu, of steadfast virtue, on the north side of the entrance to the Visvesvara temple at Kasi built a solid and lofty temple of god Padmesvara, on Wednesday, the twelfth day of the waning moon of the month of Jyaishtha, in the year of Plava: Samvat 1353, on which day this eulogy was written (Fuhrer 1889: 51).

PADMESVARA INSCRIPTION TAKEN TO LAL DARWAZA MASJID

In the reign of Akbar, the Padmesvara inscription was shifted to the Lal Darwaza Masjid in Jaunpur (Pl. 18). By then, the Visveshvara temple had been demolished and its stones used by Bayizid Bayat. In his memoirs, *Tazkira-Humayun O Akber*, Bayizid Bayat stated,

> At that time (1570-71) there was an idol temple, which owing to passage of time had become deserted and become the place of trade of the market people. I purged that place of them and started erecting a madrasa for scholars. It was completed around those few days that Raja (Todarmal) came from a bath (in the river). In that temple there was a pillar 12 *gaz* (32 feet) high; and there was a date in the Hindu characters inscribed on it stating that it had been set up

> seven hundred years ago. When Bayizid took it down, he had it cut into two parts, and the two parts again into four portions each. Six parts of the stone were used in the pillars and slabs of the mosque of the madrasa; and two parts were taken by Khwaja (Dost) Muhammad, Bakhshi of the Khan Khanan (Munim Khan) who put them on the doorway of the mosque at Jaunpur (Prasad 1990: 150).

The Lal Darwaza mosque had been built in 1447 by Bibi Rajyi, queen of Sultan Mahmud Sharqi (Cunningham 1880: 116). The presence of the Padmesvara inscription at Jaunpur corroborated that stones of Varanasi temples demolished by Feroz Tughlaq, were hauled to Jaunpur for construction of mosques.

MANIKARNIKESVARA TEMPLE

The Manikarnika Ghat Stone Inscription, dated 1359 Samvat (1303 CE), recorded the accomplishments of two brothers, both potentates. It stated that Viresvara, like his elder brother, "has conquered (all the kings) through his arms." He "has installed the temples of Manikarnikesvara (Shiva) through his own efforts ... may good be to all..." (Prasad 1990: 154).

TEMPLES DESTROYED AGAIN, REBUILT

Alauddin Khalji (r. 1296-1316) did not attack Kashi at the beginning of his reign. However, subsequently numerous temples were destroyed, and mosques raised on their sites, among them the Arhai-Kangara mosque, the Chaukhambha mosque, the mosque at Golaghat, and several in the Alaipura ward. After Alauddin's death, temples demolished on his orders were rebuilt, some at new locations. Bakaria Kund was also re-constructed at that time (Sukul 1974: 154-155).

SHARQI RULE AND ATALA MASJID IN JAUNPUR

Jaichand (r.1175-1193), the last Gahadavala ruler, had constructed the Atala Devi temple in Jaunpur, which was converted to the Atala masjid by the Sharqi Sultans (Pl. 19). Nine inscriptions found in the masjid confirmed that Firoz Shah Tughlaq commenced appropriation of the temple in 1376 CE to make the mosque. It was completed by Ibrahim Shah Sharqi (r. 1402-1440) in 1408 CE (Fuhrer 1970: 180-181).

Ibrahim Shah constructed several masjids on the sites of temples built by Vijayachandra Gahadavala (r. 1155-1169). Masjid Khalis Mukhlis (also known as Dariba or Charanguli) was built on the location of Vijayachandra's temple around 1417 CE. Rows of Hindu pillars were used for its construction. Jhanjhari Masjid was also erected on the site of a famous temple (Fuhrer 1970: 181).

SIKANDAR LODI – ANOTHER ICONOCLASTIC UPSURGE

When Sharqi rule ended, temples again began to be constructed at Varanasi but not in their former grandeur, for fear of another wave of iconoclasm. In 1496, soon after ascending the throne at Delhi, Sikandar Lodi (r. 1489-1517) ordered demolition of all temples at Varanasi. For the next eighty years, no temples were built in the city (Lannoy 1999: 569). People contented themselves with paying homage to temple ruins. The sixteenth century scholar and religious leader, Narayana Bhatta who found the Vishwanath temple in ruins, in his *Tristhalisetu*, consoled devotees,

> Even if the *linga* of Vishveshvara here is taken off somewhere and another is brought in and established by human hands, on account of the difficulty of the times, whatever is established in that place should be worshipped ... And if, owing to the power of foreign rulers, there is no *linga* at all in that place, even so, the dharma of the place itself should be observed, with rites of circumambulation, salutation, etc., and in this way the daily pilgrimage (*nityayatra*) shall be performed (Eck 2015: 134).[2]

AURANGZEB – THE ICONOCLAST

The last round of desecration was at the command of Aurangzeb. The net result of the sacrilege that commenced with Nialtagin was that Banaras of the Puranic *mahatmyas* was completely obliterated (Eck 2015: 84). The Krittivasesvara, Omkara, Mahadeva, Madhyameshvara, Visveshvara, Bindu Madhava, Kaal Bhairava, and countless other temples were all razed to the ground. In many cases, mosques were built with "calculated insolence" in their place, and the sites forever closed to Hindus (Lannoy 1999: 569). Rev. Sherring (who stayed in Banaras from 1852 till his death in 1880) remarked, "It is worthy of notice, as illustrating the nature of Mohammedan rule in India, that nearly all the buildings in Benaras, of acknowledged antiquity, have been appropriated by the Musulmans; being used as mosques, mausoleums, dargahs and so forth ..." (Sherring 1868: 22-23).

KRITTIVASESVARA – REBUILT FOUR TIMES

In 1659, just a year after ascending the throne, Aurangzeb ordered the demolition of the famous Shiva temple of Krittivasesvara situated in Daranagar, the heart of the city. The Alamgiri mosque was constructed in its place. A small empty tank that marked the site of the first, second, and third reconstructions remained under worship on *Maha Shivaratri* day. The offerings were taken by the Mutawalli of the mosque. A short distance away, a small temple was built in the nineteenth century by Raja Patnimal of Banaras, and the deity re-consecrated (Sukul 1974: 185).

VISHWANATH RISES AGAIN AND AGAIN

The great Vishwanath temple was destroyed at least thrice from the twelfth century onwards. It was first attacked by Aibak in 1194 CE. Queen Raziya (r. 1236-1240), during her short chaotic reign, appropriated the site and had a mosque constructed there. The further history of Visveshvara has been described as "one of stubbornness and bigotry" (Bakker 1996: 42). The temple became a prime symbol of Hindu resistance; they repeatedly rebuilt, as Muslims continually destroyed.

In the *Kashi Khand*, probably compiled in the fourteenth century from earlier texts and traditions, Shiva spoken of his return to the city after a long exile, and celebrated the Visveshvara *linga* as the *linga* of *lingas*.

A Vishwanath temple was constructed adjacent to Bibi Raziya Mosque in the first half of the eighteenth century, probably by one of the Peshwas (Michell 2005: 81), or, as others have suggested, by Sawai Jai Singh of Amber (Pl. 20). It was named Adi Visveshvara; *Adi* denoting it was the site of the original temple. Tradition holds that the *argha,* the ovoid seat on which the *lingam* rested, was from the Visveshvara temple, which the Rajput ruler obtained as a favour from the Mughal ruler (Sukul 1974: 177). From its exterior, the temple resembled a Muslim tomb, perhaps a cautious move by its patron. The construction "certainly suggests that a prior location for the Vishweshwur *linga* may have existed in collective memory at least at the turn of the eighteenth century when this building was constructed" (Desai 2017: 25).

As Raziya Mosque had occupied the place of the temple, the Visveshvara *linga* was accommodated in the Avimuktesvara complex, located at the foot of the mound on which the Visveshvara temple had stood. Avimuktesvara was shifted a little northwards and space for Visveshvara created between the former's temple and Gyanvapi. An imposing structure was erected there. However, another iconoclastic wave hit Varanasi, and temples were again demolished (Sukul 1974: 179-180).

DESTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

As the Avimuktesvara temple was also destroyed[3] and the site of Visveshvara occupied by Raziya's mosque, Hindus decided to construct a new sanctuary at the site of

Avimuktesvara, referring to it as Visveshvara. Avimuktesvara and Visveshvara began to be thought of as one. Avimuktesvara lost its identity and became another name for Visveshvara, who became the holiest of holy. Even religious authorities began to believe that Visveshvara and Avimuktesvara were two names of the same *lingam* (Sukul 1974: 179-180).

Mittra Misra of Orchha, in his book *Viramittrodaya – Tirtha Prakash Khand* (1620), showed that according to the *Kashi Khand* itself the two great *lingas* were not the same, and Visveshvara worshipped Avimuktesvara. Their separate existence was recognized once again, and a small temple built for Avimuktesvara near the northeastern corner of the Visveshvara temple. Due to continued upheavals, the only trace of Avimuktesvara that survived was an old stone fragment hidden amidst three Muslim graves north of the Gyanvapi mosque. It was sprinkled with flowers once a year on Shivaratri. More recently, a *linga* of Avimuktesvara was established in the southeast corner of the present Vishwanath temple (Eck 2015: 130-131).

Narayana Bhatta was involved in the reconstruction of the Vishwanath temple in 1585, about a hundred metres to the south, along with Todar Mal's son, then a Mughal official in the Jaunpur region (Altekar 1937: 45-46). Bir Singh Bundela has also been mentioned in connection with the Visvanatha temple. That could have been a restoration (or completion) of the work started by Narayana Bhatta in association with Todar Mal's son (O'Hanlon 2011: 264-265). Narayana Bhatta also devised a special procedure (*prayoga*) for renovating the Shivalinga in the new temple (Bendrey 1960: 23). The temple adhered to the earlier cruciform layout described in the *Kashi Khand* (Prinsep 1831: 68; Michell 2005: 80-81).

Narayana Bhatta's *Tristhalisetu* was likely composed after the temple had been rebuilt, as it indicated that pilgrims would see a new *linga*,

> though here the *linga* of Visvesvara is removed and another is brought in its place by human beings, owing to the times, the pilgrims must worship whatever linga is in this place (O'Hanlon 2011: 196-197).

Tavernier, who saw the temple, stated,

> ... the pagoda of Benares, which, after that of Jagannath, is the most famous in all India, with which it is even, as it were, on a par, being also built on the margin of the Ganges, and in the town of which it bears the name (Tavernier Vol. II 1889: 230).

Barely a century later, that temple was destroyed by Aurangzeb's troops after a pitched battle with ascetics of the Dashanami order at Gyanvapi (Sarkar1958: 67).[4] Hindu tradition holds that several ascetic sects were militarized and organized into *akharas* (martial arts/wrestling schools) to protect Hinduism from iconoclastic fervour (Farquhar 1925: 413-452; Orr 2003: 187-193).

A portion of the temple was intentionally retained as the rear wall of the mosque (Pl. 21). Ironically, the mosque was known as Gyanvapi mosque, deriving its name from the sacred location on which it stood (Pls. 22, 23).

Art historian, Catherine Asher advanced an intriguing interpretation of Aurangzeb's destruction of the Vishwanath and Keshavadeva temples. She argued that Mughal *amirs* had built grand temples, but had broken the allegiance system that bound them to the Emperor. Aurangzeb responded to that "violation ... by destroying property maintained previously with Mughal support." According to her, Aurangzeb in a sense "destroyed state-endowed property, not private works" (Asher 1992: 254). The scholar failed to explain the earlier destruction of these temples by Muslim invaders and rulers; and their reconstruction by non-Mughal employees - Narayana Bhatta and Ahilya Bai.

After the demolition of the temple, the Visveshvara *linga* was re-installed in an inconspicuous corner south of the Gyanvapi well. No temple was built over it, and Hindus secretly worshipped there, without knowledge of Mughal authorities. According to some accounts, Maharaja Bhava Singh of Rewa in 1672, Maharaja Jagat Singh of Udaipur in 1677, and Maharaja Aniruddha Singh of Rewa in 1695, came to venerate the deity. In 1734, Maharaja Jawan Singh of Udaipur consecrated a Shiva *linga* near Visveshvara, which survived under the name Jawanesvara. In 1749, Maharana Sangram Singh of Udaipur offered his veneration, followed in 1765, by Maharaja Asi Singh (vide dairies of the *tirtha purohits*).

In 1777 CE, Ahilya Bai Holkar of Indore built the present Vishwanath temple (the so-called Golden temple) over that *linga*. Her royal inscription made no mention of establishing a different *linga*. That explained why the Visveshvara *linga* was in a corner of the sanctum sanctorum, and not in the centre as was the practice (Sukul 1974: 181-182).

Located a few metres south of Aurangzeb's Gyanvapi mosque, Ahilya Bai's temple lacked the grandeur of India's great temples. It was situated in a crowded part of city, its architectural features hidden from proper view behind the compound wall. Nonetheless, the temple typified the revivalist style of north Indian architecture in the eighteenth century, with its combination of a spired sanctuary and a domed *mandapa*.

The prestige of Ahilya Bai's temple prompted Governor General, Warren Hastings in 1781, to instruct Ali Ibrahim Khan, magistrate of Banaras, to erect an ornate gateway to the temple (*naubatkhana*, or drum house). The pavilion protecting the sacred Gyanvapi, or Well of Wisdom, north of the temple was added by Rani Baija Bai, widow of Daulat Rao Sindhia in the early nineteenth century. The well was believed to have been dug by Shiva himself; its waters were a liquid form of *jnana*, enlightening wisdom. In 1839, on orders of Maharaja

Ranjit Singh, the spires and dome of the temple were draped with embossed gold sheets (Michell 2005: 81-82).

Several subsidiary shrines were located in the courtyard of the Vishwanath temple. To the left of the entrance was an image of Vishnu, which was to be worshipped along with Vishvanatha. Near Vishnu, was the image of Avimukta Vinayaka, the Ganesh of the old Avimuktesvara temple. And in a shrine to the far right was the Avimuktesvara *linga* (Eck 2015: 120-125).

THE WAR OF THE *LAT*

The area of the Gyanvapi mosque remained the site of considerable tension. In 1809, one of the worst Hindu-Muslim clashes in the city's modern history broke out when Hindus attempted to erect a small shrine on the narrow strip of neutral ground between the mosque and the Visvanatha temple.

The so-called War of the Lat involved three sacred spaces – the Visvanatha (Visveshvara) temple, the Kapalamochan tank, and Gyanvapi mosque. The Lat Bhairava pillar was very old and sacred. It was likely an Ashokan pillar that Hiuen Tsang had seen in 636 CE near a Buddhist stupa. The *Mahatmyas* referred to a 'pillar of the great cremation-ground' (*mahasmasana stambha*), that stood at the present location of the Lat (Sukul 1977: 120-121, 260-61; Eck 2015: 196-197). The area around the *mahasmasana stambha* appeared to have been the haunt of Kapalikas and Pasupatas. Through a gradual evolution, the Lat came into the religious custody first of Naths (Jogis), then of Gosains.

The temple-complex where the Lat Bhairava pillar was located had been destroyed by Aurangzeb, and the area converted into a mosque and tomb-site. The pillar was left undisturbed, Rev. M. A. Sherring was to later observe, "...either as an ornament to the grounds, or under a wholesome dread of provoking to too great a pitch the indignation of his Hindu subjects" (Sherring 1868: 141). The pillar was separated from the idgah by a small enclosing brick wall. Just outside the wall and to the north was the 'well of Bharata' (Bharat *kupa*). To the south was Kapalamochan, where Hindus took a holy dip.

As in several instances where temples were partially or wholly destroyed, Hindus held on to the site though it was situated in the midst of a mosque and tomb ground. Muslims permitted Hindus some access to the pillar, in return for a share of the offerings, as they admitted in a petition to British officials in 1809,

> for some years, the lower classes of Hindus and Muhammedans have annually celebrated the marriage of the Laut and have divided the offerings between them (Freitag 1989: 206).

The pillar was once much taller. Tavernier, who saw it in 1665, described it as 32 to 35 feet high. On the capital of the pillar, he reported, was a round ball encircled below with a row of beads. According to a legend heard by Tavernier, the Lat was gradually shrinking. When its top became level with the ground, it was said *dharma* would be completely eroded and chaos would prevail. That happened in 1809. The pillar was almost completely levelled, and is now just a stump, 3 feet thick and 7 to 8 feet high. It was covered with copper sheeting after the riot by the British Magistrate.

The three day carnage started with a minor incident. A Nagar Hindu, on recovering from illness and in fulfilment of a vow, tried to erect a permanent stone enclosure in place of the makeshift mud dwelling of Hanuman on the contested ground between the idgah and the Lat. A gathering of Julahas (weavers), who used the idgah, objected that it represented a permanent encroachment on their space. On 20th October 1809, they destroyed the stone structure. That prompted the Rajputs of the city to attack a nearby imambara following day. A crowd of armed Julahas then marched towards the Vishwanath temple. Before they reached there, they were confronted by an armed group and some of them lost their lives. Thereupon the Julahas retreated and later in the day decided to destroy the Lat Bhairava pillar. Next day, the Rajputs attacked the Julaha neighbourhood and nearby sites which included one dedicated to Fatimah. The Gosains attacked the Gyanvapi mosque. There were losses on both sides (Pinch 2012: 90-91).

Bishop Heber, who visited Banaras some years after the incident, was briefed on the incident by the magistrate, Mr. Bird. Heber wrote,

> One half of the population was literally armed against the other, and the fury which actuated both was more like that of demoniacs than rational enemies. It began by the Musulmans breaking down a famous pillar, named Siva's walking-staff, held in high veneration by the Hindoos. These last in revenge burnt and broke down a mosque, and the retort of the first aggressors was to kill a cow, and pour her blood into the sacred well. In consequence every Hindoo able to bear arms, and many who had no other fitness for the employment than rage supplied, procured weapons, and attacked their enemies with frantic fury wherever they met them. Being the most numerous party, they put the Mussulmans in danger of actual extermination, and would certainly have, at least, burned every mosque in the place before twenty-four hours were over, if the Sepoys had not been called in (Heber 1827: 428-436).

Hindus Erect a Platform for Gyanvapi

Hindus seemed to have emerged better in the incident for James Prinsep's (1799-1840) drawing of the area in 1831 (Pl. 24) showed that they had erected a platform for Gyanvapi on the covered ground (Prinsep 1831; Eck 2015: 127-128). Today the entire area around the mosque is filled with Hindu activity.

A detailed report on the riot, based on first hand British accounts, and 'Memorials' written by Hindus and Muslims, was prepared by Phil Robinson. According to the Muslim Memorial, legal proceedings against a similar earlier change in shared sacred space were never settled and were interpreted as victory by Hindus. The Muslim Memorial stated that Hindus had even placed images of Rama and Lakshmana into the pulpit of the idgah during Dussehra celebrations the previous year, and had done the same in the present year (1809) (Robinson 1877: 114).

The Hindu Memorial countered by stating that the idgah was esteemed by the Muslims only because it marked the former ascendancy of Islam over Hindus, whereas the Kapalamochan tank and the Lat were of the highest sanctity for Hindus (Robinson 1877: 98-99).[5]

THE OMKARA TEMPLE

The Omkara temple housed the most important Shiva *linga* in Kashi a thousand years ago. It occupied an entire hilltop. The whole area was taken over by Muslims and remained scattered with graves, and the shrine of a Muslim saint. The Omkara temple was reduced to a small structure, built in the eighteenth century by Rani Bhavani of Nator (Bengal) and given to a priestly family from Banaras. That family delegated the daily worship and service of the deity to a *pujari* who resided at the temple. For centuries that had been a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood, and hardly any Hindu visited the temple. The few Hindus who lived in the vicinity were too poor to support it (Sukul 1974: 183-184).

KAAL BHAIRAVA

Kaal Bhairava was originally situated near the Omkara temple in Pathani Tola. The image was re-consecrated at the present site in the early thirteenth century in a thatched hut that was later covered with country tiles. There was no temple, no display, which saved the image from subsequent attacks. The image remained known to the Hindus, but did not attract the attention of iconoclasts for around six hundred years, till the present temple was constructed by Vinchurkar, a general of the Peshwas, around 1825 CE (Sukul 1974: 191).

KEDARA

Kedara was one of the early temples of Kashi mentioned in the Puranic *mahatmyas*. According to devotees, Kedara was the respected elder of Visveshvara and the oldest Shiva *linga* in Kashi. It was also locally claimed that Kedara survived the great destruction of Aurangzeb in the seventeenth century. That made the present Kedara temple older than the present Visvanatha temple. Legend has it that when Aurangzeb's troops approached the temple they were counselled by a Muslim holy man to retreat. The advice was unheeded, and the troops stormed into the temple. The commander slashed the image of Nandi, kneeling before the doorway to the sanctum. Blood was said to have flowed from its neck, and the assailants backed away in awe and fear (Eck 2015: 142-144). Kedaresvara is presently a large structure on the banks of the Ganges at Kedarghat.

Countless other images were displaced. Viresvara, now known as Atma Viresvara was an important deity, originally situated near Rajghat plateau. The temple of Trilochanesvara, one of the sixty-eight symbolic Shiva *lingas* installed in Varanasi to represent the most important *lingas* of India, remained in ruins for several centuries as local Muslim governors resided near the locality. The new temple was built by one Nathu Bala.

Vrishabharadwaja, the only *linga* mentioned in the *Mahabharata* in connection with Varanasi, is still worshipped by every pilgrim who performs the *panchakosi yatra* (Sukul 1974: 185-186).

ADI KESHAVA

Adi Keshava, earlier known as just Keshava, was the patron deity of the Gahadavalas. After the demolition of Rajghat fort in 1194, the temple lay in ruins for several centuries. It was rebuilt and re-consecrated in the eighteenth century, but did not regain its earlier standing. During the Revolt of 1857, the ruined Rajghat fort was used as army headquarters by the British, and the temple again closed for worship for several years (Sukul 1974: 186; Eck 2015: 233).

BINDU MADHAVA

Bindu Madhava was the most important Vishnu temple in Varanasi since the fifth century CE. It was mentioned, along with Adi Keshava, in the *Matsya Purana* as one of the five important *tirthas* in Varanasi. Vandalized several times between the twelfth and sixteenth, it was rebuilt the last time by Raja Man Singh in 1585, around the same time that Raja Todar Mal constructed the Vishwanath temple. Commended by Tulsi Das in several poems, it was among the tallest and finest buildings atop the Panchaganga Ghat. Tavernier described it as the most imposing structure along the Banaras waterfront (Tavernier Book III 1889: 179-182). A temple dedicated to Ramachandra, and a Vedic *pathashala* were built adjacent to the temple, and the shrine of Mangalagauri was located inside the walled enclosure.

In 1669, Aurangzeb had the temple demolished, and a huge mosque with two tall minarets built in its place, which dominated the skyline at the Ghat (Pl. 25). Rama Mandir was spared due to a miracle, as per a local story. The *minars* of the mosque were always called *Madhavarao Ka Dharhara* by Hindus, in memory of the temple-towers they had displaced. By the time Rev. Sherring wrote in 1868, the minarets had already been shortened by some fifty feet because of their instability.

Finally one of them fell down, and the other was shortened still further. Then they ceased to exist (Sukul 1974: 186-187).

The Vishnu image in the Bindu Madhava temple was kept concealed in a dwelling. A fourteenth or fifteenth century image of Bindu Madhava is still preserved in a private house near the Kaal Bhairava temple (Sukul 1974: 188). The temple now bearing the name Bindu Madhava was a non-descript structure in the shadow of the mosque, but it continued the traditions associated with the site (Eck 2015: 206-207).

BAKARIA KUND

Bakaria Kund, an important Vishnu site in northern Banaras, from where a large Gupta period image of Krishna lifting Mount Govardhan was recovered, was also ravaged. The larger than life-size image showed that the temple must have been an imposing structure (Pl. 26). The area was likely the location of the Krishna cult. Rev. Sherring, however, described Bakaria Kund as "Buddhist ruins" (Guha 2012: 68-71). A mosque built on its foundations survives, surrounded by Muslim graves.

VISHNU

An image of Vishnu was instated in Varanasi in the hoary past, in the Mukti *mandap*. It was a very revered icon till 1669, but with the destruction of the Mukti *mandap*, its worship practically ceased. Tradition, however, maintained that the Vishnu image was safeguarded, and later placed in the left hand corner of the Visveshvara complex (Sukul 1974: 186-187).

The *Kashi Khand* mentioned forty-three other Vishnupithas, including those of Keshava, Madhava, Narsimha, Vamana, and Varaha. Most of the images presently instated in the shrines belonged to the eighteenth century, except that of Tamra Varaha (situated in Brahmanala *mohalla*), which belonged to the ninth century. The new images seemed to have been consecrated at the time of Maratha ascendancy.

BHAIRAVA *PITHAS*

Asitanga Bhairava was originally situated near Krittivasesvara, and later re-consecrated in the Vriddhakal temple. Kapali Bhairava had his temple somewhere in the Nag Kuan area; while Samhara Bhairava was initially located to the east of Kharva Vinayak in Rajghat Fort, but re-consecrated near Patan Darwaza (Sukul 1974: 191-192).

DEVI TEMPLES

The *Kashi Khand* listed many temples dedicated to goddesses, which no longer exist. Till the sixteenth century, Bhavani Gauri was worshipped as Annapurna, and the deity in the temple where Annapurna is now worshipped was Bhuvanesvari. After the demolition of both temples in 1496, the temple of Bhavani Gauri remained a wreck, but a new temple was built at the site of the Bhuvanesvari temple, under the name of Annapurna. Though Bhavani Gauri's image was later re-consecrated in a small temple, it never acquired its earlier standing and the new Annapurna began to be worshipped in the manner prescribed for Bhavan Gauri (Sukul 1974: 188-189).

Numerous other shrines, too many to enumerate, were displaced, reduced in size, or simply erased.[6] The Banaras that was reconstructed in the eighteenth century was markedly different from the Banaras destroyed. Sacred geography had changed beyond recognition.

AYODHYA – HINDUS HOLD ON

Though the temple at Ayodhya was destroyed on orders of Babur in 1528, Hindu veneration of the site did not diminish.[7] William Finch, an English traveller, who visited India between 1608 and 1611 CE, confirmed an active Hindu presence at the site.[8] He referred to "the ruines of Ranichand(s) (Ram Kot, fort of Rama) castle and houses, which the Indians acknowled(g)e for the great God, saying that he tooke flesh upon him to see the *tamasha* (show or spectacle) of the world."

He also observed the presence of Brahmins, "in these ruines ... who record the names of all such Indians as wash themselves in the river running thereby..." There was a cave some two miles on the further side of the river "where it is thought his (Rama's) ashes were buried. Hither resort many from all parts of India, which carry from hence in remembrance certaine graines of rice as blacke as gun-powder, which they say have beene reserved ever since" (Foster 1921: 176).

The Austrian Jesuit, Joseph Tieffenthaler, who toured Awadh between 1766 and 1771, saw Hindus worshipping a religious structure in the form of a *vedi* (cradle) in the premises. The large gatherings of Hindus on the occasion of *Rama Navami* (Rama's birthday) also attracted his attention. Tieffenthaler wrote,

> On the left is seen a square box raised 5 inches above the ground, with borders made of lime, with a length of more than 5 ells and a maximum width of about 4 ells. The Hindus call it Bedi i.e. 'the cradle.' The reason for this is that once upon a time, here was a house where Beschan was born in the form of Ram. ...in the place where the native house of Ram existed, they go around 3 times and prostrate on the floor. .... On the 24th of the Tschet month, a big gathering of people is done here to celebrate the birthday of Ram, so famous in the entire India ... (Judgement of Justice Agrawal of Allahabad High Court: pages 3503-3509 para 3514).

Walter Hamilton, in his *Gazetteer* of 1828, also noted the influx of pilgrims who "resort to this vicinity, where the remains of the ancient city of Oude and capital of the Great Rama are still to be seen." He said religious mendicants "walk round the temples and idols, bathe in the holy pools, and perform the customary ceremonies" (Hamilton Vol. I 1828: 350).

The extensive court cases after 1857 demonstrated the continuing Hindu claim to the site. They also confirmed that large crowds visited Ayodhya throughout those centuries, particularly on *Rama Navami*, and that special arrangements had to be made for the pilgrims on such occasions (Jain 2013: 117-150).

A report by the District Magistrate of Faizabad in the aftermath of riots in 1912, also mentioned the large influx of pilgrims in Ayodhya for the "PaiKarma," (*parikrama*), and for one of the three important bathing fairs of the year (N.A.I. Home Political Branch B April 1913, Nos. 109-114: 44-46).

A letter from R. Burn, Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, dated 25th January 1913, stated that,

> One perpetual cause of friction was the existence of a mosque on the traditional site of Ram's birthplace. This was constructed in 1528 by the Emperor Babar who destroyed the ancient temple and used its materials for the new building.

The letter said that before the annexation of Oudh in 1856 there had been many occasions on which bitterness between Hindus and Muhammadans resulted in bloodshed. After the Mutiny, however, there had been no major trouble till the recent events. That was due to the fact that the Muhammadan residents of Ajodhya were now,

> of comparatively little importance and have not been in a position to assert themselves against the powerful associations occupying the numerous Hindu temples and religious establishments (N.A.I. Home Political Branch B April 1913, Nos. 109-114: 39-43).

The Lieutenant-Governor, who visited Faizabad on 18th July 1915, observed,

> It is very difficult ... for anyone who is not a Hindu to appreciate the reverence which they feel for the holy ground of Ayodhya... (N.A.I. Home Political Branch A, October 1915, Nos. 258-259: 5-6). During the riots of 1934, a large crowd of Bairagis attacked Babri Masjid. When the Deputy Collector

> visited the site, he found at least 200 Bairagis at work demolishing the mosque... (N.A.I. Home Department – Political F. No. 5/2/1934 Poll: 4-6).

Subsequently, on 20th November 1943, in a letter to the Secretary, Sunni Waqf Board, Kalab Husain, Mutawalli of Babri Masjid stated,

> this mosque has been built on such a place where often riots took place and every year there is apprehension of breach of peace (Judgement of Justice Agrawal of Allahabad High Court 2010: pages 2940-2947 para 3103).

A report by Muhammad Ibrahim, Inspector of Waqf (dated 10th December 1948), confirmed continuing tensions at the site. It stated,

> On investigation in Faizabad city it was revealed that because of the fear of Hindus and Sikhs no one goes into the Masjid to pray Namaz Isha. If by chance any passenger stays in the Masjid he is being put in trouble by the Hindus. Out of the Sahan of Masjid there is a temple where many Pandas reside and they harass the Muslims whosoever visit inside the mosque. I went at the spot and from inquiries it was revealed that the said allegations are correct. Locals went on saying to the extent that there is great danger to mosque from Hindus that they may harm its walls etc. (Noorani I 2003: 203-204).

Barely two weeks later, Muhammad Ibrahim presented another report (23rd December 1948), wherein he described his visit to Ayodhya the previous day. He mentioned that Baba Sukhdas had visited Ayodhya three months ago and while addressing the *Bairagis* and *pujaris* said that *Ramayana patha* should be recited at the birthplace. The news had spread to the surrounding areas and within a month hundreds of *pujaris* and *pandits* had assembled there. The recitation of the *Ramayana patha* had been going on for weeks, during which time the area in front of the Masjid was dug up by the *Bairagis* and a flag hoisted there. Several graves were also exhumed. Muhammad Ibrahim reported,

> There is always a lock on the Masjid. There is no namaz or *ajan* at any time. The keys of the lock of the Masjid are with the Muslims. Police do not allow the lock to be opened. On Fridays for about two to three hours ... the cleaning and sweeping is done and *Shube* namaz is also done. Then it is locked. At the time of the *Shube* namaz, a lot of noise is created, and when the *namazis* leave, from the surrounding houses shoes and stones are hurled towards the *namazis*. ... Mr. Lohia also visited Ayodhya ... The bairagees said the Masjid is Janmabhumi, and so give it to us. ... I spent the night in Ayodhya, and the bairagees are forcibly taking possession of the Masjid. Today it is Jumma, I visited the site, and what do I see there: ten or fifteen bairagees armed with *lathis* and *farsa*, and many others with sticks in their hands are standing near the gate of the Masjid. Many are also collecting there from nearby... (Noorani I 2003: 204-205).

The report confirmed that Hindus continued to enter the inner courtyard and worship there. No restrictions were imposed on their entry. Further, at least three non-Muslim structures existed in outer courtyard, where also worship went on unhindered.

HINDU APPLICATION FOR CONSTRUCTION OF RAMA TEMPLE

After independence, the Hindu public presented an application to the UP Government for the construction of a Rama temple near the mosque. The City Magistrate submitted his repor on the matter on 10th October 1949, wherein he stated,

> Hindu public has put in this application with a view to erect a decent and *vishal* temple instead of the small one which exists at present. There is nothing in the way and permission can be given as Hindu population is very keen to have a nice temple at the place where Bhagwan Ram

> Chandra Ji was born. The land where temple is to be erected is of Nazul (Noorani I 2003: 205-207).

RAMA IMAGE INSTATED

On 23rd December 1949, the Senior Sub-Inspector, in charge *Thana* Ayodhya filed a First Information Report (FIR) that a group of fifty to sixty persons had entered Babri Masjid the previous night and placed an image of Ram *lalla* in the mosque. Significantly, no Muslim came forward to lodge an FIR or complain of dispossession or obstruction in his alleged use of the Masjid.

In a letter to the Chief Secretary UP Government, dated 26th December 1949, K.K.K. Nayar, ICS, Deputy Commissioner/D.M. Faizabad pointed to "the immense public sympathy in support of this cause" (Noorani I 2003: 212-214). In another letter to the Chief Secretary, on 27th December 1949, Nayar said that the Commissioner had given him and the Superintendent of Police a scheme for surreptitiously removing the *murti* from the mosque. He described the idea as "fraught with the gravest danger to public peace over the entire district and must lead to a conflagration, of horror unprecedented in the annals of this controversy." The Hindus, with no exception, were for keeping the *murti* in situ, and,

> are ready to kill and die in this cause. The depth of feeling behind the movement and the desperate nature of the resolves and vows in support of it should not be underestimated...

He added,

> I shall also be unable to find in the district a Hindu, let alone a qualified priest, who will be prepared on any inducement to undertake the removal of the idol.

Nayar offered a solution for the Government's consideration. He suggested that the mosque be attached and both Hindus and Muslims be excluded from it, with the exception of a few *pujaris* who would offer *bhog* and *puja* before the image, which could continue. The parties would be referred to the Civil Court for adjudication of rights. No attempt would be made to hand over possession to the Muslims till the Civil Court, if at all, decreed the claim in their favour (Noorani I 2003: 215-218). Nayar's suggestion was supported by the Divisional Commissioner.

A diary maintained by Nayar recorded events from 23rd December 1949, from 7am onwards. An entry, dated 30th December 1949, mentioned the visit of the Chief Secretary to the site, where he was surrounded by a crowd which shouted, "*Bhagwan ka phatak khol do*" (Judgement of Justice S.U. Khan of Allahabad High Court 2010: 35-36).

Thereafter, on 29th December 1949, Markanday Singh, the Additional City Magistrate, Faizabad-cum-Ayodhya, ordered attachment of the property under Section 145 Criminal Procedure Code 1898 and appointed Priya Dutt Ram, Chairman, Municipal Board, as receiver to take care of the property. The receiver took charge on 5th January 1950 and immediately took steps to ensure continuance of *bhog* and *puja*

Several years later, on 1st March 1986, the District Judge Faizabad ordered the locks on Babri Masjid be opened so devotees could have proper *darshan* of Rama *lalla*. On 6th December 1992, the masjid was demolished. Amidst all these developments, Ram *lalla* remains *virajman* at the site, awaiting an appropriate abode.

NOTES

1. The importance of Varanasi can be gauged from the fact tha when *jaziya* was imposed on pilgrims visiting the city, Hoysala king of Carnatak, Nrisimha III in 1279 CE donated village with a revenue of 645 *Nishkas*, for the payment of tha tax by residents of Carnataka, Telengana, Talvi, Tirhut, an Gauda, and for the worship of Visveshvara. Around the sam time, Seth Vastupal of Gujarat sent a *lakh* of rupees for th worship of Visveshvara (Motichandra 1985: 190).

2. Sheldon Pollock pointed out that in the eleventh-twelfth centuries a large number of *dharma nibandhas* were composed in court circles of the ruling classes. These included the now lost codes of king Bhoja of Dhar; the commentary on *Yajnavalkya smriti* by Vijnanesvara, who was patronized by Vikramaditya VI of the Chalukya dynasty; the commentary on the same text by Aparaka of the Silahara dynasty; the fourteen-volume digest, *Krtyakalpataru* by Lakshmidhara, chief minister of king Govindachandra; five copious works on dharma composed at the court of Ballalasena of Bengal, possibly composed by him; the code of Hemadri, minister at the Yadava court at Devagiri; and the monumental work on Parasara by Madhava, minister at Vijayanagara. According to Pollock, there was a need felt for a special reaffirmation of *dharma* at a time when that way of life confronted in the Central Asian Turks a radically different social and religious formation (Pollock 1994: 98-106).
3. Avimuktesvara was the most sacred deity of Varanasi till the end of the twelfth century. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, Visveshvara enjoyed that position (Pathak 1957: 174).
4. Some scholars have claimed that Aurangzeb destroyed the Vishwanath temple as Brahmins had aided Shivaji during his escape from Agra in 1666. That did not explain why the Emperor destroyed other temples in the city. It is likely that Shivaji met the noted Gagabhatta at Kashi, while on his way back to Raigad from Agra. In 1673, Gagabhatta went to the Deccan to visit his native Paithan, and also worship at the temple of Ma Bhavani. Gagabhatta called on Shivaji at Raigad. He was of the view that in the interests of *Hindavi Swarajya*, Shivaji should be consecrated king, as per the *Shastras*. He supervised the coronation ceremony held in June 1674 (Bendrey 1960: 22-29).

   The destruction of the Visveshvara temple cannot be explained as a move to crush a rebellious Mughal opponent, for Banaras was not a royal city. Some scholars attributed demolition of the Visveshvara temple to reports Aurangzeb received of undesirable educational activities in schools and places of worship in the city, which attracted students from afar. Saqi Mustaid Khan recorded that on 17 Zil-Qad A.H. 1079/8 April

1669 CE,

"The Lord Cherisher of the Faith learnt that in the provinces of Tatta, Multan and especially Benares, the Brahman misbelievers used to teach their false books in their established schools, and that admirers and students both Hindu and Muslim, used to come from great distances to these misguided men in order to acquire this vile learning. His Majesty, eager to establish Islam, issued orders to the governors of all provinces to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels (Hindus) and with the utmost urgency put down the teaching and the public practice of the religion of these misbelievers" (Saqi Mustaid Khan 1947: 51-52).

Such single cause explanations fail to account for the systematic destruction of temples in the city and elsewhere.

The most recent Visvanatha temple was New Visvanatha, in the Banaras Hindu University campus. Work on it began in 1938, and was completed in 1966.

5. The Hindu Memorial was presented to the British on 20th November 1809 (*Calcutta Review* 1877: 15-21). It stated,

"We, all the Brahmins, Cuttries and persons of Byse and Sooder castes, beg to lay before the English; a representation of the past, present and future, in order that it may be received with mature circumspection and our existence as a people preserved. It is this –

We, every sect of the Hindu persuasion, have emigrated from all parts of the country to this place, for our religion tells us that Casjeejee (Benaras) is a spot eminent beyond all others for its religious purity and a place of worship and adoration. It is here that according to the Beyds, Poornas and Shastras, the gods have always fixed their residence, and the Hindu inhabitants of the place have invariably performed with sincere hearts their devotion, ablution, and worship to the four Deymuto (Divinities), vis., Seree Bisseysur jeo, the Ganges, Unpoorna jeo, and Kaul Bhyroo, Koolust hum jeo. According to the tenets of the Beyds, Poorans, and Shastras, we Hindus have thus acted from the creation, and are still fixed in our true faith....

When he [Aurangzeb] came to Benaras, considering (as it would seem) the places of our Deymuto as pure and august, he erected a mosque on the site of the Temple of Bisseysur. As kings in their divine wisdom are mindful of religion, he knew that the supplications of those who err are acceptable only from places like these, and he laid the foundation his mosques on the ruins of many of the Hindu temples. As he was a powerful and mighty monarch we from necessity submitted with patience.

'The anger of a mendicant retorts upon himself.'

The Musalmans have now violated our religion. The story is this –

On Monday, the 16th of Cooar, corresponding with the 28th Shaban 1217 (9th of October 1809), many of the Hindus of Benaras went to make their offerings at Cuppeeladhara (situated ... about three coss from the city) to the manes of their deceased relatives, a duty incumbent on those whom the departed have left behind. On that day the Musalmans slaughtered a cow in Mehullah Naugnauth. It so happened that a Luheyra (a worker in Lac) was on the spot; seeing this outrage he mentioned it to the Ruttun Singh Choudry, who told it to his father. Ruttun Singh perceived that in concealing it the Hindu religion must be suppressed. Ten or twelve creditable persons went to the Kotwal of the city. They did not meet with the Kotwal of the city, and told the story of the slaughter of the cow to the Kotwal's Mootsuddee who wrote to the Thanawallah, and the person who slaughtered the cow was apprehended. The Kotwal released him, expressed displeasure at the persons who made the complaint, and paid it no attention. We determined amongst ourselves that, as the court was then closed, a petition should be presented to the Huzoor after the Bijjaee Dussmee and Burrup Millaup, which happened on Thursday, 26th of Cooar, corresponding with 9th Rumzaun 1217 (19th October 1809) were passed. On the day following, namely, Friday, the 27th (20th October), the suffeed bafs (weavers), at the instigation of the principal Musalmans, assembling in a body went to the of Bhyroonauth jee, made a disturbance, beat the Jogees of the Lat, rooted out a chowra (stand) which contained a Toolsee tree as also the idol of Hunooman, &c., defiled the whole of the place and committed outrages, which it is highly indecorous consistent with our religion to mention. After these improprieties had been committed they returned to their homes. In the evening several Hindus went according to their usual custom to pay their devotions at the place and saw that the whole was filth, that the idols were broken and the place of worship entirely spoilt. They asked the Jogees who were there, who has spoilt the place? The Jogees related circumstantially what has passed. The Hindu overwhelmed with grief, distracted with astonishment, and pained to the quick, returned back. On reaching home they deliberated thus among themselves. "We were seeking justice for the slaughter of a cow: this other flower has blown."

It was then night, and they rose and exclaimed "Doohaye" in every Mohullah. They poured forth their complaint and vociferated. "Oh Hindus, in this way have the Musalmans been before-hand in oppression, but every Hindu who is true to his faith unite in the morning, surround the Lat of Bhyroojee and see the violence which the Musalmans have done." On the morning of Saturday, the 28th Cooar (21st of October), the Hindus accordingly began to assemble, and met to the number of two or three hundred with grief and lamentation. On receiving intelligence of this the Kotwal came on horseback to the spot with 200 Chuprassies and Sawars and required the Hindus to disperse. Fearful of their honour many of them took their way to the city, and the Kotwal took his seat on the Chubbootra at the Laut and sent word for a few of the Hindus to come to him, and he would hear what they had to represent. They obeyed the order... went to the Kotwal, who without making enquiries, took them with him to the Thanah at Cazee Mundree and beat them. As thousands of Musalmans were assembled in the Imambarra, and the Hindus...to the number of two hundred remained, they began to pelt each other. In this mutual attack part of the Jauly of the Imambarra was broken and our Deymuto (Divinities) received some injury. The Kotwal on hearing this immediately came to the spot, gave notice by proclamation that not a man of the Hindus should remain, turned out the chuprassies, posted a guard of Musalman peons, and gave it to be understood that the Musalmans were going to the temple of Bisseysur and would commit violence there. On hearing this, the Hindus reflecting, that from the former neglect, the images of their Deymutto had been broken and rooted out, in order that a similar outrage might not be committed at the Bisseysur, and injury heaped upon injury, all at once ran off and reached the Bisseysur. The Musalmans finding the place clear were glad to avail themselves of the opportunity it afforded. At this period [the Musalmans] ... commenced a disturbance. They accordingly collected large quantities of food, oil and dammer, and having rubbed the Lat from the top to the bottom with spirits and gun-powder, set fire to the whole, and bhishtees who came from different quarters sprinkled the pillar with water. It has been ascertained that the Lat notwithstanding all these attempts, did not fall till they sprinkled it with the blood of a cow and her young, which they got from a *bhang* and dragged, tied by the neck, to the spot. On this outrage the *chucker* on the Bhyroo Lat jee spun round and tumbled and the Lat burst and fell to the ground. They cast the cow which they had slaughtered into the tank of Kapilmochun which is near the Lat and completely defiled it. Such was the persecution imposed by a set of noorbeafs (weavers) of mean extraction at the instigation of the Musalmans of rank, and a tyranny unknown to Aurungzebe Alumgeer himself was practised by this vulgar race.

We, the Hindus, being informed of what happened, went all night from house to house vociferating, exclaiming, and beating our breasts till it was day. It was (a morning which for us was like to the last day) on Sunday, the 29th of Cooar, 22nd October, that the flame of dissension had become general, and the principal persons amongst the Hindus as Brahmins, bankers, and others felt alarm as to what might be the pleasure of God and what was to happen. When this was known to the English, Mr. Bird immediately came with other gentlemen, and day and night labouring to restore order and safety to the city and to pacify the Hindus, went about from ward to ward and from temple to temple.

The Brahmins, Pundits and 10 sects of Gosains; the Rajpoots, Gungapootras and Ghauties, 36 castes of Hindus, had seated themselves on the bank of the Ganges, and with a two days fast supplicated the Creator of the world for redress. Thousands of them had abstained from food altogether, when Mr. Bird, being informed of the penance they had imposed on themselves, went in clemency and compassion to console them, and with assurances of redress and justice desired them to break their fast and eat; all obeying the order rose and ate their food... He regretted that there was so much to lament and deprecate, and observed that such things had perhaps never before occurred, but desired us to rest satisfied that justice would be done us...

From the personal bigotry of Aurungzebe Alumgeer, mosques were erected on the site of our place of worship; the four principal Bisseysur (The old temple at Bisseysur on the ruins of which the present mosque was erected in the reign of Aurungzebe Alumgeer. Part of this temple was left which projects from the back of the mosque. The present temple of Bisseysur is contiguous to the mosque and separated from it only by a compound wall) and Gyanbaffi; Kirrit Baseysur (a small mosque built in the reign of Mahomad Shah is situated here. There is a fountain in the centre of the same architecture as the mosque. On the anniversary of the Shiva Rattree, 13th of Phagoon, the whole body of Hindus visit this fountain for the purpose of pooja in common with the other sacred places) Bindoo Madho (The mosque with the famous minarets is erected here. The present temple of the idol is at a short distance to the eastward of the mosque); and Caul Bhyro Koolusthum (The Lat which has been destroyed. The ground about which was taken for the Eedgah and other religious purposes by the Musalmans under the Mahommedan Government). Tha emperor in his zeal introduced his religion in common with ours at these places.

It is prayed that these may be restored to us for the purposes o our worship; and we Hindus, by the favour of the English confirmed as heretofore in the exercise of our religion, that we may pray for the eternal prosperity of the English and the mutual differences which night and day subsist in regard to those places be adjusted.

That the Musalmans be not allowed to come to the places o worship, or to kill cows, or for recreation and pleasure to pas along the roads frequented by the Hindus in order that by this method a line may be distinctly drawn between us. You are yourself the distributer of justice and are acquainted with the Bheyds, Poorauna and Shaster. Let such measures be adopted as may fix and confirm the Hindu religion, establish a certain rule in future and adjust all differences.

The English Company, may its prosperity be perpetual, as the sovereign of Hindustan, give ear to the complaint of us who are poor and helpless. If the Musalmans enjoy strength and power for war and combat, let them look to the Caaba and Curbulla, the true places of their worship. It is but lately, as all the world knows, that a sect of their own, the Mohaubies [Wahhabis] attacked the Caaba, made a general massacre in their holy city, rooted up the tombs and monuments of their prophets and their imams, and plundering property by crores, carried it off as spoil. Allee Nukee Khan, the vakeel of the late Ibrahim Allee Khan, resided there with his family and with his women and children was put to death. Let them go there and wage war with the destroyer of their race, let them seek retribution for the blood of their own tribe, and in support of their faith kill the enemies and murderers of their brethren and be killed themselves. The fame of their attachment to their faith will be thus spread throughout the world, and they may restore their dilapidated tombs and Imambarrahs. By their constant dissensions with us poor creatures they vainly injure their own hopes in the next world, and only harass us. You are the ruling power, put a stop to this violence...." (*Calcutta Review* 1877: 15-21).

The Muslim Memorial was presented on 27th November 1809 (*Calcutta Review* 1877: 21-28). It said,

"... The practice of killing cattle for beef has been habitual from the first dawn of Mahommedanism in the city. It was not hindered or prohibited, though the province of Benaras was held and governed by Hindu chiefs. ...

For three years the Dusseyrah and Mohurram occurred at the same period with each other; Mr. Duncan restrained the Hindus from celebrating the festival of the Dusseyrah till the Mohhurrum was over, by which arrangement peace and quiet were preserved. Whilst that gentleman was in power, there was a Mahratta who wished to appropriate a part of the compound of the mosque of Bebee Ranjey; the Musalmans met and remonstrated. An affray ensued in which an idol was destroyed; the Rajpoots assembled to breed a riot, and it ended in Mr. Duncan preventing the Mahratta from erecting the building he proposed...For three years the Hooly and Mohurrum happened together. By the arrangement made by Mr. Stuart for preventing dancing and the other festivities common on the former occasion, the Hindus were restrained during Mohurrum, and tranquillity was preserved.

The injury which the faithful have now suffered at the hands of the Gosains, Rajpoots and other Hindus...For the purpose, however, of obtaining justice, we beg to submit a distinct narration of what the Musalmans have suffered.

In the suburbs to the eastward of the city of Benares, within the compound of an Eedgah, stood a pillar (Laut) of considerable antiquity which the Musalmans suppose to have been the structure of Feroze Shah, like the pillar (Laut) at Allahabad, Delhi and other places, and which the Hindus state to have been erected by their own forefathers. But, be that as it may, it was not as an object of their worship entitled to any great veneration like the temples of Bisseysur and Bhyronauth; for no account of this pillar is to be found in any of their orthodox books. The style of worship of the Hindus is this, wherever they find set up (a pillar) they call it, at the incitement of their priests, a place of their worship, and after some time has elapsed they consider it as a place of worship of the highest sanctity. The best is that about two and twenty years ago some Hindus corrupted Meer Khyraut Allee, the Mutwali (superintendent), of the Jumma Musjid of Alum geer, commonly called Bisseysur mosque, and pretending that Bisseysur had concealed himself in the well, they began to worship the well (called the Geeanbefee), and shared the offerings with the Mutawali. In the same way they worship with the utmost faith a stone fountain (it is this mosque and fountain which the Hindus in their memorial state to have been erected on the site of Kirrit Bisseyaur. The mosque appears from the inscriptions on it to have been built by the orders of the Emperor Mahomed Shah at the solicitation of Moofti

Nooroollah in the year 1077 Hijree, on the ruins of a Bhootkhana (temple of idolatry), the last Sheikh Hautim Allee was a lineal descendant of Moofti Nooroollah ...) in the compound of the mosque at the house of Sheikh Hautim Allee in Mohulla Daranugur. So also was the Laut of Feroze Shah converted by them into the Laut of Bhyroo, and the lower order of Hindus worshipped it.

A Laut was erected by Mr. Boddum at Gaya, it is just now only a thing for the pilgrims to revere and the priests to make money of; but when all the persons who are acquainted with the fact are dead, it will be honoured with the name of Mahdeo or Brahma. It is just so at Benaras. The mosques which are built by Aurangzebe are called by the Hindus one, the mosque of Bisseysur and another the mosque of Madho Roy (The mosque with the famous minarets named Bindo Madhoo in the Hindu memorial). For some years the lower classes of Hindus and Musalmans have annually celebrated the marriage of the Laut, and have divided the offerings between them. Near the Laut of the Eedgah there is a peepul tree, and under this tree the Hindus put some idols and made it a place of their idolatry.

When the Musalmans gathered together for the purposes of prayers at the Eed, &c., the Brahmins on the spot removed the idols. If there happened to be any which could not be conveniently taken away they were carefully concealed with grass. The faithful on the day of the Eed used to perform the sacrifice there and never met with any interruption from the Hindus. It is not long ago that under a tree, the Brahmins spoken of put a tiled chopper to shade an idol and called it a place of worship. The Musalmans objected to it at the time, and brought their complaint before the Adalat; but it so happened that it was never determined, and the tiled chopper was not destroyed. The Hindus, considering this as a victory, proceeded to greater enormities, and they last year, on one of the days of the Dusseyrah, put a Ram Luchmun into the member (pulpit) of the Eedgah; went through ceremonies of that, fasted, trampled the place in their shoes, and spit about it. This year they were for three days guilty of the same disrespect; but the Musalmans reverence the Government, said nothing, and allowed it to lay over for a formal complaint to the court. In every sense the Hindus are the original aggressors. Besides all this, a Naugur lately collected a number of bricks and stones for the purpose of making a stone temple within the compound of the Eedgah. The Musalmans objected, but the Hindus paid no attention to their remonstrances, and the materials collected by the Naugur are still on the spot. The Noorbeafs (Musalman weavers) who came as usual to Friday prayer at the Eedgah after prayers, were over, consulted about the complaint that was to be made respecting the erection of the temple.

The Hindoos say that some of them committed indignities such as removing the toolsee tree, &c. If this be true, the crime was certainly not of a very heinous nature; and had the Hindoos complained of it to the regular authority, the offenders would have been punished. It is for the punishment of offenders, and that people may not take vengeance on each other, that courts are established. Several Hindoos, in opposition to this established rule of Government, assembled at night, proceeded to the Eedgah, and broke the door of the Mimber. Though this itself was a flagrant outrage they did not stop here. In the morning they assembled in a riotous manner at the Laut, assaulted and stoned a Syud traveller who was reading the Koran till they had nearly deprived him of his life, and tearing the holy Koran to pieces scattered it about the road, when the Kotwal arrived and by mild exhortation succeeded in dispersing them. Notwithstanding the prohibition of the Kotwal the Hindoos again assembled at the Laut, insulted people as they passed along, proceeded to the Imambarrah in the vicinity of the Laut, and tore the pall (ghilauf) to pieces, broke and destroyed the frill work (jauly) of the doorways, and stone chubootrahs, the lanterns, the consecrated Kuddum Shurreef and Punjah Shurreef, and a great many tombs. A party of them afterwards proceeded with mischevious intent, towards the Durgah of the Punjah Shurreef, which is situated in the city. On the occurrence of this event a rabble assembled, moved towards the temple of Bisseysur, which is situated in the city. They were attacked near Gayaghat by the Hindoos, and one man was killed and several wounded. These low people (who are not of a description to bear arms) finding that they had not the power to proceed further into the city, retreated, and, rallying at the Laut of the Eedgah, in return for the indignities committed at the Imambarah, &c., destroyed the Laut. When this was known the acting magistrate again came in person with a party of officers and Hindoo troops, took measures for the general safety, posted guards in different places, and gave of justice to both parties. The Noorbaafs (weavers) who were assembled at the Imambarrah for its protection, did as they were directed, and returned to their homes. The court was still open to complaint, but not a man of the Hindoos chose to avail himself of it, and they prepared for riot. The Rajpoots of the Mohullahs of Peeree, Hurha, Darranuggur, Cazee Mundee, Bhardawjee Tola, Publam Ghat, &c., and the Gosains and other disorderly persons among the Hindoos in every Mohullahs, urged on by Sustee, Budloo Ramdeal, Lalchund and other officers of police, during the whole night incited the people in every street and lane to insurrection and made them swear by their religion that it was grievous, and that every man would leave his home and take "vengeance on the Musalmans." Influenced by this incitement and oath, they poured forth in troops and gangs and filled the city with desolation and plunder; every man whom they met was murdered.

The Imambarrah was re-attacked by a band who sacked and pillaged it of sacred relics which cannot be regained. Its buildings were pulled down and burnt with the property they contained. ......

The like atrocities were committed by the Hindoos at the Royal Jumma Musjid in Mohullah Bisseysur, by fire and sword. The mosque was ravaged, the minarets were thrown down; property plundered and burnt; the buildings round the mosque were reduced to ashes; the artisans who inhabited them were deprived of life, and the child of the Mutwali (superintendent) of the mosque, was wounded, though his life was saved by a Brahmin who was rewarded for the act.

They pulled down and destroyed upwards of 60 Musjids and broke up hundreds of tombs; every man whom they met with a beard they took for a Musalman and killed. The Gosains sacked hundreds of private dwellings; when they had taken up the property they set fire to the dwellings, and every one found in them they slew. They ran about in armed bodies for the purpose of plunder and murder, and a large party of them went to pull down the Punjah Shurreef and the Prince's Muzzar to the westward of the city. ...

Dissension has ever subsisted between the Hindus and Musalmans; public order is maintained by the wisdom of the rulers...

... It is prayed that the ancient Musjids and the tombs, and the sacred places which have been broken down and burnt, be rebuilt and repaired from the property of the oppressors and plunderers, their aiders and abettors; and that restitution of the loss of sacred relics, and the pillage of private property in the city, which is consonant to justice and the established rules of Government, be awarded to us...

.... that the spots within the precincts of Musjids which the Hindoos, contrary to fact pretend to call their places of worship, such as the well of the mosque of Alumgeer [called in the Hindoo memorial Gianbaafee], the house of Sheikh Hatim Allee [Kirrit Busseysur], with the compound of the Eedgah, with the Laut [Caul Bhyro] of Feroz Shah; and, which from the avarice of the ignorant Mutwalee of the faithful they have for some time frequented for the purpose of Pooja, be prohibited to them, in order that a stop may be put to the dissensions which must constantly arise from participation of the Hindoos..." (*Calcutta Review* 1877: 21-26).

Some scholars reject a religious dimension to the 1809 riot. They hold the colonial administration with its alien mentality responsible for the unrest. Sandria Freitag argued that lower caste Hindus and Muslims jointly celebrated the marriage of the Lat with the adjoining well, as also the Bharat Milap. Since Hindus and Muslims jointly protested against the 'house-tax' imposed by the British soon after, Freitag asserted that 'Hindus' and 'Muslims' did not then exist as distinct identities (Freitag 1989: 39, 211). Gyan Pandey also minimized the role of religion and focused instead on the agency of the subaltern (the 'lowest') castes in organizing anti-British resistance on behalf of all Banarasis. He explained the mutual participation of (especially the lower-caste) Hindus and

Muslims in each other's festivals in terms of syncretism and shared religious values. He added that in the years preceding the riots, the reformist (Wahhabi) wave of Islamic self-consciousness among the weavers coincided with an increased assertiveness due to recent economic prosperity (Pandey 1990: 96-107).

6. So complete was the destruction of Banaras that not a single pre-eighteenth century temple survived. The Kardameshvara temple at Kandwa, five km southwest of the city, appeared to belong to the tenth-eleventh century. A close scrutiny revealed that the temple was dismantled at some point, and rebuilt later according to the original plan as then understood. During the reconstruction, all available original blocks, including damaged sculpted panels were used. The work seemed to have been undertaken in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the *panchakosi yatra* route had been restored, partly due to the patronage of Rani Bhavani of Natore (Bengal). The Kardameshvara structure confirmed that when temple building recommenced in the eighteenth century, the builders revived the curving *shikhara* tower, which had earlier been the most distinctive feature of north Indian Hindu architecture (Michell 2005: 79-84). The reconstruction of the temple also demonstrated remarkable fidelity to the original shrine.
7. Hindu tradition holds that Shyamanand, head priest of the temple, with others offered stiff resistance for about seventeen days before being overpowered and killed. In order to save the deity, he flung it into the Saryu flowing at the back of the temple complex. In the early twentieth century, some Mahants of the Kalai Ram Temple, while bathing in one of the *ghats* claimed to have found that very image, and installed it in their temple. The temple archives record that the mahants informed the district authorities of their find. They also reveal that the priests got the *dhat* (metal) of the deity examined before accepting it as the genuine old deity (Grover 2015: 30-31, 273).
8. The Kullu Dussehra commences with a *rath yatra*, in which the chief deity, Raghunathji is carried in a decorated wooden chariot, which signifies the march of Rama to conqueror Ravana. The image of Raghunathji was brought from Ayodhya in July 1651 by one Damodar Das, and installed in Kullu by Raja Jagat Singh.

7

Deities Fleeing Krishna *Bhumi* Arrive in Rajasthan

Many deities fleeing Krishna *bhumi* found safe haven in Rajasthan. But Rajasthan's encounter with Islamic iconoclasm had begun well before Aurangzeb's time. The *Arhai-din-ka-jhonpra* was commissioned by Qutubuddin Aibak on the site of a Jain college at Ajmer. The Jain columns were sawn apart and then re-erected on top of each other, with the carvings of figures mutilated (Hillenbrand 2008: 232-237).

SACRED SIKRI DESECRATED

Several other sacred sites in Rajasthan suffered severe assault. D.V. Sharma, who excavated in the Sikri region (ancient Seka), established that it had been a major temple-town and cultural centre like Osian, Gwalior, Vidisha, and Khajuraho. He reconstructed the sacred culture of several temple towns in the area, like Chichana, Chauma-Shahpur, Imlaoda, Churyari, Rasulpur, Jautana, Kiraoli, Dura, and Kagarol on the periphery, and Sikri at the nucleus.

The temples invited the attention of iconoclasts like Mahmud Ghaznavi, Muhammad Ghori, Iltutmish, Alauddin Khalji, Feroz Tughlaq, and Sikandar Lodi who desecrated the beautiful shrines in the region. A mosque built by Alauddin Khalji still existed in village Sikri. A Persian inscription recorded the activities of Sikandar Lodi. The defilement of the temples and images was "most barbarous". Sharma found a multitude of desecrated sculptures, including life-size Jain Tirthankaras, Bodhisattvas, Yakshas, *lingas*, Parvati, Surya, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Ganesh, Balarama, among other deities (Sharma 2008: 21-24).

BIRCHHABILI-TILA

Excavations at Birchhabili-Tila indicated the existence of a major Jain sacred centre. The remains of a temple, with large quantities of architectural parts dated to the 9th-11th centuries, were found. Also unearthed was a man-made pit of red sandstone slabs, covered with two massive stone slabs. It suggested that soon after the demolition of the site, people decided to religiously dispose the broken and mutilated images, which they buried in the pit. The images included that of Ambika, the Yakshini of Tirthankara Neminatha. It was found in two pieces, with the portion above the neck broken (Sharma 2008: 36-45).

Around thirty-four sculptures of Jain Tirthankaras, in standing (*kayotsarga*) and seated (*padmasana*) postures, of the tenth-eleventh centuries were found during excavations at Birchhabili-Tila. All were found beheaded and mutilated, and buried together in a *Visarjana* trench (Sharma 2008: 49-57, 74, 79-81).

A life-size image of Jain Srutidevi Saraswati was discovered buried face downward, indicating that it was placed there with care after being uprooted from its original position in the temple. It was carved out of a single block of stone but was fragmented into several pieces. The sculpture appeared to have already been broken when buried. It did not seem to have been desecrated by iconoclasts, but was shattered when hastily removed from the temple at the time of an invasion, to protect it from defilement. It was not placed in the *Visarjana* pit. The Saraswati image was likely a Siddha Devi, whom people, including non-Jains, revered and tried to save. It was one of the most graceful Jain Saraswatis to have been sculpted (Sharma 2008: 74-79).

MATA KAMAKHYA – DEITY OF SIKAR RAJPUTS

In the medieval period, Mata Kamakhya, deity of the Sikarwar Rajputs was forced to leave her home in Rajasthan. The Sikarwar Rajputs derived their clan name from Sikar district, where they ruled for several generations. According to their history, they established Vijaipur Sikri in 823 CE, during the reign of Rana Bhatribhat of Chittor.

At the time of the battle of Khanua, the ruler of Sikri was Dham Dev Rao Sikarwar. He joined the Rajput confederation of Rana Sangha against Babur. The battlefield extended from Khanua till the ramparts of Sikri Fort. Sikarpur provided logistic support to Rana Sangha's army, which camped in and around Sikri Fort for over a month. With Sikri as his base, Rana Sangha planned to attack Agra, but was pre-empted by Babur.

Rana Sangha was badly wounded in the battle. He was loaded on the back of a camel, as was the Sikarwar deity, Mata Kamakhya. They were transported to the safety of the Aravallis. The Sikarwars also left Sikri to protect their religion and families from Babur's force. Babur occupied the town of Vijaipur Sikri, which he renamed Fatehpur Sikri.

The refugees from Sikri proceeded to Gahban, present day Gahmar (Ghazipur district, UP). Dham Dev Rao Sikarwar seemed to have supported Sher Shah against Humayun in the battle of Chausa (Gahmar lay two km west of Chausa). The Sikarwars also spread towards Bihar as Sher Shah's allies.

The first temple of Mata Kamakhya had been established at Sikri (now Fatehpur Sikri) by Brijraj Dev Sikarwar sometime in the tenth century CE. He was believed to have attacked Sindh, then under Muslim control,

> With the grace of Mata Kamakhya, he sacked the Muslim occupied Sindh. To please Goddess Kamakhya, he got her temple constructed at Sikri. Dham Dev, the last ruler of Vijaipur Sikri frequently prayed before her idol.

That image of Mata Kamakhya was transported by Dham Dev Rao Sikarwar and re-established at Gahmar. A temple was constructed by Sikarwars of the region and those who resided in Bihar. A rare contemporary source of the history of the Sikarwar Rajputs, who held sway over Sikri for over three centuries is preserved in the family of Col. Dharam Raj Singh Sikarwar (Sharma 2008: 153-170).

BIKANER

IMAGE BROUGHT FROM "DEVASTATED KARNATIK"

Several instances of displacement and reclamation of images were reported from Bikaner. Sihaji or Sivaji, founder of Jodhpur State, was according to royal bards, a grandson of Jaichand, the last Gahadavala king who was killed while fighting Muhammad Ghori in the battle of Chandawar, in 1193. The Gahadavalas claimed to be a branch of the Rashtrakutas, one of the most powerful dynasties of medieval Deccan (circa 753-973). The Deccan link of the family was still remembered in the fourteenth century. Sihaji's grandson, Duharji installed at Nagana an image of the family goddess, Rashtrasena that had been saved from the "devastated Karnatik" (Goetz 1950: 33-34).

ALSO FROM MANDOR

In 1460 CE, a descendant of Sihaji, Rao Jodha (1416-1489) brought the image of Chamunda Mata from the old capital of Mandor and instated it in a temple in Mehrangarh fort (Bunce

2006: 64-67). Chamunda Mata was the *kuldevi* of the Pratihara rulers of Mandor. She then became the tutelary deity of the Rathor Rajputs.

FROM JODHPUR

Bika, the fourth son of Rao Jodha, established his own kingdom and in 1488 CE constructed a mud fort at the site of present Bikaner town. Bika brought from Jodhpur an image of Adinath, that Rao Chondaji (Rao Jodha's grandfather) had taken when he won possession of Mandor, in 1380. The Jain Chintamani temple was built for the image. Bika also brought from Jodhpur the great Bhaironji (Bhairava, a natural *lingam*), that he set up at Rao Jodha's tank at Kodamdesar (Goetz 1950: 43, 60-61).

1050 IMAGES TAKEN BACK FROM AKBAR

A descendant of Bika, Rai Singh (r. 1571-1611) entered into an alliance with Akbar. As Rai Singh held large tracts of land in Gujarat and Kathiawar, the Jains in Bikaner asked Akbar for privileges for the Jain shrines at Girnar and Shatrunjay. In 1583, Rai Singh succeeded in obtaining from Akbar the 1050 Jain idols looted from Sirohi in 1576 CE. He dedicated them to the Chintamani temple at Bikaner. He also brought back bronze images from Gujarat (Goetz 1950: 42-43). The wealthy Jain community that was attracted to the new state, restored old temples at Morkhana, Taranagar or Bhinasar, and also built new temples like the gigantic Bhandasar.

IMAGES SAVED BY BEING FERRIED AWAY IN SADDLE BAGS

Jain temples had been constructed in the region from early on. A temple at Taranagar (Reni district) was said to have been founded in Samvat 999 (942), another at Nohar in Samvat 1084 (1027), and a third at Bhinasar outside Bikaner town in Samvat 1204 (1148). However, no trace of these structures survived.

During Muslim attacks, many idols, especially small ones, were saved from defilement by being hidden in the saddle bags of people fleeing into the desert. The only actual remains of Jain temples found so far are at Pallu (Nohar district), about sixty miles south-east of Suratgarh. Here also, almost nothing of the old temples survived except a few sculptures and architectural fragments. Some of these could be seen in Bikaner Museum. An architectural piece was built into the walls of a nineteenth century temple, while a third group lay in the dunes at Gosaino, about a mile south of Pallu. These must have belonged to at least three different temples, dating from the mid-12th to the late 13th century. The larger ones, which contained two exquisite Saraswati images in polished white marble, may have been structures of sun-dried bricks; the third was a small, exquisitely carved shrine in red sandstone. After the Muslim invasions ceased, it was the Jains who first resumed construction of temples. Many images brought from Adoni by Anup Singh were kept in Har Mandir, in the fort built by Rai Singh (Goetz 1950: 59-62).[1]

DEITIES ARRIVE FROM MATHURA

Ishwardas Nagar, a Brahmin of Pakpattan and an eyewitness to most events of Aurangzeb's reign, wrote of the Emperor's order of 1669,

> When the imperial army was encamping at Mathura, a holy city of the Hindus, the state of affairs with regard to the temples of Mathura was brought to the notice of His Majesty. Thus, he ordered the faujdar of the city, Abdul Nabi Khan, to raze to the ground every temple and to construct big mosques (over their demolished sites) (Ishwardas Nagar 1978: 83).[2]

GOVINDADEVA

The royal decree led to a mass migration of deities. Govindadeva's long journey from Vrindavan has been reconstructed by historians and merits retelling. Altogether eight temples were built as temporary abodes for the deity in flight, till it finally reached Jaipur and was instated in the ninth temple, where it remains under worship today.

The priests of the Govindadeva temple first headed for Radhakund, in the direction of the Kacchavaha state and away from the imperial highway. Radhakund was surrounded by a forest, and the hardy Jat peasantry lived all around. It was a site associated with the *lilas* of Krishna. Chaitanya was said to have visited the area and reclaimed Radha *kunda* and Krishna *kunda*. The Gosains of the Chaitanya *sampradaya* had an establishment there and controlled both *kundas*. Jiva Gosain, nephew of Rupa and Sanatan, had acquired land at Radhakund, and several deeds dating from 1546 to 1588 CE survive. The *vigrahas* of Govindadeva and Radha could reside in safety at Radha *kunda* (Horstmann 1996: 185; Mukherji and Habib1987: 237-239, 244-4).

The images were consecrated in a hurriedly raised structure, that survives almost undamaged and where worship continues (albeit with other deities). The structure resembled a residential building, and had none of the features of a temple. It was the first temple with neither a *shikhara*, nor a *mandovara*, nor a *pitha*, all obligatory as per the *shastras*. The threat from Aurangzeb had made it difficult to adhere to *shastric* injunctions (Nath 1996: 165-168).

From Radhakund, Govindadeva was taken to Kaman, as was evident from a letter of Raja Ram Singh I (r. 1667-1689; ruler of Amber after the death of Mirza Raja Jai Singh), to his minister, dated 1671 CE. The letter noted the arrival of the deities at Kaman and directed the minister to make arrangements for the onward journey (Bahura 1996: 205). The deities stayed at Kaman for four years. Vrinda Devi, who had remained with them thus far, stayed back at Kaman, when the others resumed their journey (Horstmann 1996: 185). The ruins of a temple still exist at Kaman, and a representative image is installed in a separate temple.

Govindadeva left Kaman in 1674-1675 CE, probably as the place was no longer regarded safe. The images were taken to Govindagadha, where they were kept inside a fort, situated at a distance from the village. The temple in the fort was built in a manner as to remain concealed till one stepped into its compound. The deities remained there for around twenty five years, from 1675 to 1700 (Nath 1996: 169).

In 1699 CE, Sawai Jai Singh ascended the Kacchavaha throne. As Aurangzeb was now confronted with challenges on several fronts, the Gosains, around 1700, moved the deity to Khava, on the route from Govindagadha to Govindapura (Rupaheda). Govindadeva may have resided there till 1707. The temple, though presently in a ruinous condition, remains a living shrine (Nath 1996: 172-173).

In 1707, the year Aurangzeb died, the image was brought to Govindapura (Rupaheda) in Sanganer tahsil, about ten km from Jaipur. The temple seemed to have been hurriedly made. It was now in shambles, though according to villagers it was being sustained to an extent 25-30 years ago. They said the Brahmins of Govindapura, who were local and not Bengali, receive for their own consumption, a certain quantity of material provided to the Govindadeva temple of Jaipur for feeding of the deities (Horstmann 1996: 185-186).

Govindadeva stayed at Govindapura (Rupaheda) from 1707 to 1713, whereafter the image was shifted to Kanak Vrindavan, near Amer. This was confirmed by the contemporary court poet, Atmarama. In his biographical work, *Savai Jaya Simha Carita,* he recorded that Sawai Jai Singh founded New Vrindavan on the way from Amer to Jainivasa (Jaipur),

> Here Savai Jaya Simha, with full determination, established a new Vrndavana, and here he consecrated the image of Sri Govindadevaji. He was profusely inspired by the religion of Bhakti (Nath 1996: 175).

In 1715, Govindadeva was moved from Kanak Vrindavan and brought to Jainivasa garden, Jaipur. The city of Jaipur was being constructed during the years 1713 to 1727. In those years, the Chandra Mahal, Govinda Mahal (Surya Mahal), and Badala Mahal were completed. Govindadeva was instated at Govinda Mahal (Surya Mahal) before the founding of the city (Okita 2014: 28-29). That became his permanent abode. Where the image was housed from 1715 to 1727 remains unknown (Nath 1996: 178-180).

IMAGES OF VALLABHA SAMPRADAYA ALSO FLEE

SRINATHJI

The story of the migration of Sri Nathji, foremost icon of the Vallabha *sampradaya*, after Aurangzeb's order of 1669, was narrated in the *Shrinathji ki prakatya varta* (SKPV).[3] It was composed in Brajbhasha by Goswami Hariray, a great grandson of Vitthal and a leading literary figure of the *sampradaya*.

After leaving Govardhan, the image was first concealed in Agra, where it was secretly worshipped in the house of a devotee (Shyamdas 2004: 79; SPV: 39-42). Another deity from Gokul, Navanit Priya was also taken there (Shyamdas 2004: 81-84). Both deities then left for Kota, on the suggestion of its ruler. From Kota they travelled to Kishangarh, and then to Chaupasani, on the Jodhpur border. The priests requested Rana Raj Singh for permission to settle in Mewar. The enthusiastic Rana even offered to place a hundred thousand Rajputs at the disposal of the Gosains for protection of the deity (Jindel 1976: 22). On that assurance, the Gosains set out for Udaipur, and reached the village of Sinhad (or Siarh), forty km north of the city (Shyamdas 2004: 93-104; SKPV: 48ff), where the cart carrying the deity got stuck. That was interpreted as a sign that Sri Nathji desired to stay there.

Security would have been the prime consideration in selecting that remote site, surrounded by hills and thick forests. It was also close to the Rana's capital. The deity was installed in a temple constructed there on 10th February 1672 (Jindel 1976: 23). The flight of Sri Nathji from Braj to Nathadwara took 2 years, 4 lunar months, and 7 days (SKPV: 48). The site was a short distance from where the deity of Dwarkadhish had been brought the previous year.

Navanit Priya was brought to Nathadwara along with Sri Nathji and his temple was part of that main temple (Jindel 1976: 25). James Tod narrated the story of the image of Nonita, the young Krishna,

> This image, which was one of the penates of a former age, and which since the destruction of the shrines of Krishna by the Islamites, had lain in the Yamuna, attached itself to the sacerdotal zone of high priest Balba, while he was performing ablutions, who, carrying it home, placed it in a niche of the temple and worshipped it and Nonanda yet receives the peculiar homage of the high priest and his family as their household divinity (Tod Vol. I 1920: 272).

The temple of Madanmohan (another *svarupa*) was also linked to the main temple of Sri Nathji (Jindel 1976: 25).

OTHER IMAGES OF THE VALLABHA SAMPRADAYA

Like the image of Sri Nathji, the other *navnidhis* remained in Braj till Aurangzeb's orders led to their dispersal. A tradition recorded that the deities often escaped the imminent arrival of "iconoclastic Mughal horde" by being concealed in the turbans of temple servants (most Vallabha images were only a few centimetres tall, only Sri Nathji was three-fifths human size) (Peabody 1991: 727-728).

The image of Vitthalnathji, deity of the second Gaddi, was the only one to have left Gokul before Aurangzeb's order. In 1580, it was taken to Kota by its custodian, Hari Rai Bhatt, where it stayed for about 125 years. From Kota, it went to the village of Khamnor, in Mewar, where a temple was constructed for it. It remained there for 75-80 years. Thereafter it was installed in a temple just opposite that of Sri Nathji (Jindel 1976: 26).

Many images remained on the move for several decades. Their movement was attested by abandoned temples and memorial shrines (*charan chaukis*) in western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Malwa. After leaving Mathura, Sri Dwarkanath was taken to Ahmadabad (1670), Asotiya (late 17th century), Kankroli (1720), Udaipur (1802), and again Kankroli (1808). The image of Sri Gokulnath first went to Banaras, then to Jaipur (late 17th century), and finally returned to Gokul (mid-19th century). The journey of every divine *svarupa* could be similarly reconstructed (Peabody 1991: 742).

Eventually, four *navnidhis* – Sri Nathji, Sri Navanit Priya, Sri Vittalnath and Sri Dwarkanath found shelter in Mewar. Three *navnidhis* – Sri Gokulnath, Sri Gokulchandrama, and Sri Madanmohan settled in Jaipur. Sri Mathuresh was first taken to Bundi and then Kota, and Sri Balkrishna to Surat. Though these images remained in these kingdoms over the next century, they sometimes travelled between kingdoms and sometimes within them (Peabody 2003: 66-67). After being on the move for several decades, the deities, Gokulnath, Madanmohan, and Gokulchandrama, settled in Jaipur in the latter part of the eighteenth century. They were eventually brought back to Braj[4] (P. Mittal, *Braj ked harm-sampradayo ka itihas,* National Publishing House 1968: 302; Entwistle 1987: 185).

THE DEITIES AT KOTA

In the eighteenth century, Kota was twice involved in the movement of deities. The first incident occurred in 1744, during the reign of Maharao Durjan Sal, when Gosain Gopinath of the *sampradaya's* first *gaddi,* moved the image of Mathureshji from Bundi to a *haveli* in Kota's main bazaar, about 400 metres from the Maharao's palace. The *haveli* had been presented to Mathureshji by one of Durjan Sal's ministers (the image stayed there except once in 1952, when it was taken to Jatipur in Braj, returning to Kota in 1975) (Peabody 2003: 67). Mathureshji was Kota's most popular deity.

The kingdom's tutelary deity was Brijnathji, a man-made *murti* not of the same rank as the *navnidhis*. On 20th June 1720, Maharao Bhim Singh of Kota was defeated and killed in the battle of Pandhar in the Mughal province of Malwa. He was then fighting in the service of Mughal Emperor, Muhammad Shah against Malwa's rebellious governor, Chin Qilich Khan (the future Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah).

According to a tradition in Kota, the *howdah* of Bhim Singh's war elephant that was captured, had the nine centimetre tall golden image of Sri Brijnathji.[5] The image was Bhim Singh's *ishtadevata* (chosen deity). He had received in 1719, a year before the battle of Pandhar during a pilgrimage to Mathura from one of the sect's religious leaders. Bhim Singh had dedicated his kingdom to the deity and governed on its behalf as *diwan*, or prime minister.

After Bhim Singh's death, Qilich Khan took the image along with other war booty to the Deccan, where it remained for four years, before being returned to Kota in 1724. Until the battle at Pandhar, Bhim Singh had been Kota's most illustrious ruler. During his thirteen year reign (r.1707-1720), he had transformed Kota from a petty principality to an important successor state that emerged in the wake of Mughal decline. In 1713, he was given the title 'maharao,' or 'great king' by Emperor Farrukh Siyar. He was Kota's first ruler to be granted that honour, and the following years received other valued regalia from the Mughal Emperor (Peabody 2003: 15-18).

According to Kaviraja Lakshmandan's unpublished work of 1870, Qilich Khan gave the deity to a wealthy *seth* (merchant) who spent a huge sum on its worship, before giving it back to Kota some four years later, at the beginning of the reign of Maharao Durjan Sal (r. 1723-56). Lakshmandan wrote that the disaster of Sri Brijnathji falling into Muslim hands was mitigated as a Hindu,

> ...merchant (*seth*) in Hyderabad solicited this image (from Nizam-ul-Mulk) ... and built a temple nearby (in the Hyderabad bazaar), installed the image, and spent hundreds of thousands of rupees from his household on its worship (Peabody 1991: 737).

Lakshmandan added that during the brief reign of Bhim Singh's successor and eldest son, Arjun, the deity remained in Hyderabad, and the silver image of Sri Giridhar was substituted in Kota's palace temple. After Arjun's premature death, there was a struggle for the throne between his younger brothers, Shyam and Durjan Sal. In a bid to counter Shyam's claim, Durjan Sal attempted to validate his position by recovering the image of Sri Brijnath,

> When (Maharao) Durjan Sal ascended the throne in the year Samvat 1780 (AD 1723), he made repeated efforts to have (Sri Brijnath) returned to Kota. Eventually (Kota's prime minister) was sent to Hyderabad, and with some trouble he brought Sri Brijnath back to Kota the following year. (Maharao) Durjan Sal greeted the image with great pomp at a distance of 25 kos (80 kilometers) from the kingdom, and then reinstalled the image in the Kota temple (Peabody 1991: 737-738).

Durjan reportedly sent an emissary to the Deccan, who retrieved the idol. However, it cannot be stated with certainty that the recovered *murti* was the very one that had been lost (Peabody 2003: 31-33, 46-47).

NOTES

1. The Raos added their own structures. Bika's younger son, Rao Lunkaran (1505-1526) built the Lakshminatha temple. Others built a shrine for the deified Charan (bard) prophetess Karniji, and the Kapila temple at Kolayat (Goetz 1950: 44, 61). Nagnechiji (Durga Rashtrasena), the family goddess of the

Rathors, and Lakshminatha, patron of the state, were soon displaced in public favour by Karniji, as the historic incarnation of Devi (Goetz 1950: 44, 61). Anup Singh (r. 1669-1698) was the greatest ruler of Bikaner after Rai Singh. He saved Bikaner from Aurangzeb (Goetz 1950: 44-47).

In 2010, the authorities of the Chintamani Parasnath temple brought out for *darshan* and *puja*, all the 1100 Prachin Jain Tirthankara statues, most made of *Panch Dhatu*, some of marble, and one of rock crystal. These had been kept underground in Mughal times, to save them from desecration.

2. Saqi Mustaid Khan recorded an incident concerning desecration of temples in Jodhpur following the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur at Jamrud near the Khyber Pass in 1679, "S. Khan Jahan Bahadur came from Jodhpur after demolishing the temples and bringing with him some cartload of idols, and had an audience of the Emperor, who highly praised him and ordered that the idols which were mostly jewelled gold silvery bronze copper or stone should be cast in the yard of the Court and under the steps of the Jami' mosque to be trodden on" (Saqi Mustaid Khan 1947: 108-109).
3. James Tod wrote about Nathadwara,

   "When Aurangzeb proscribed Kanhaiya and rendered his shrines impure throughout Vraj, Rana Raj Singh "offered the heads of one hundred thousand for his service," and the god was conducted by the route of Kotah and Rampura to Mewar. An omen decided the spot of his future residence. As he journeyed to gain the capital of the Sesodias the chariot-wheel sunk deep into the earth and defied extrication; upon which the *Saguni* (augur) interpreted the pleasure of the god, that he desired to dwell there. This circumstance occurred at an inconsiderable village called Siarh, in the fief of Delwara, one of the sixteen nobles of Mewar. Rejoiced at this decided manifestation of favour, the chief hastened to make a perpetual gift of the village and its lands, which was speedily confirmed by the patent of the Rana. Nathji (the god) was removed from his car, and in due time a temple was erected for his reception, when the hamlet of Siarh became the town of Nathdwara, which now contains many thousand inhabitants of all denominations, who, reposing under the especial protection of the god, are exempt from every mortal tribunal..." (Tod Vol. II 1920: 609-610).

4. Two *mahotsavs* (great festivals) were held at critical moments, when eight of the nine *navnidhis* gathered at Nathadwara. Collective "nervous eating" took place on both occasions. The first *mahotsav* occurred in late 1739 when the Marathas were on the ascent, and Nadir Shah sacked Delhi. Kota began paying an annual tribute to the Marathas in 1740. The second *mahotsav* took place in 1822, when several kingdoms in Western India, entered into subsidiary alliances with the British (Peabody 2003: 62).
5. James Tod recorded the incident,
   "On this occasion the Haras sustained a double loss: their leader, and their titular divinity, Brajnath, the god of Braj. This palladium of the Haras is a small golden image, which is borne on the saddle-bow of their princely leader in every conflict. When the *gol* is formed and the lances are couched, the signal of onset is the shout of 'Jai Brajnathji!' 'Victory to Brajnathji!' and many a glorious victory and many a glorious death has he witnessed. After being long missing, the representative of the god was recovered and sent to Kotah, to the great joy of every Hara. It was in S. 1776 (AD 1720) that Bhim Singh perished, having ruled 15 years, during which short period he established the affairs of his little dominion on a basis which has never been shaken" (Tod Vol. III 1920: 1526).

8

Central India

UJJAIN - MAHAKALESHWAR

The mythic antiquity of Ujjain went back to creation itself. The gods and *asuras* once churned the ocean for *amrita*, the nectar of immortality. When the vessel of *amrita* appeared, the gods hurried away with it to heaven. Four drops fell on earth, one of them at Ujjain.

Ujjain was praised in many *Puranas*, specially the *Avantika Khanda* of the *Skanda Purana*. The seat of Mahakaleshwar was venerated as one of the twelve *jyotirlingas*, and was renowned throughout India by at least the fifth century CE (Willis 1988: 276). Ujjain was the hometown of the great Sanskrit poet, Kalidasa. In his *Rahguvamsa*, he mentioned Mahakala at Ujjain several times (*Rahguvamsa* V. 8, VIII. 95, XVIII. 32). Lakshmidhara, in Chapter 10 of his volume on pilgrimage, listed Ujjain as a revered site (Aiyangar 1942).

Kalhana, while re-counting the campaigns of Lalitaditya Muktapida, stated that the king worshipped at the *Mahakala* shrine in Ujjayini, capital of Avanti in Malava – "The tusks of his elephants were split only by the light of the moon on the diadem of [Siva] *Mahakala*, as they marched in rows into *Avanti*" (*Rajatarangini* Book IV. 162, Vol. I: 136).

The Arab traveller Gardizi (d. 1060), wrote of the deity at Ujjain,

> ...They have a place called UJJAYN with a large idol representing (Maha-kal). They take before him their needs in this lower world and the world beyond and from him learn charms (aza'im). They do wonderful things saying that they all are from (Maha-kal's) teaching... Some people come to worship him while for several days they refrain from food and humble themselves asking him for their needs. Some take an iron lamp and shaping its bottom like a spear place it on their palm and press it until it has pierced the palm and made a hole in it. Then they light the lamp and kneel down on both knees before the idol with lamentation saying: "accept from us our visit to this house" (Minorsky 1948: 635).

DESTROYED BY ILTUTMISH

The temple was destroyed by Sultan Iltutmish in 1234 CE. Minhaj-us-Siraj, a contemporary chronicler, described the event in his *Tabkat-i-Nasiri*,

> ...he sent, in A.H. 632 (1234 A.D.), the army of Islam towards Malwa and took the fort and city of Bhilsa. There was a temple there which was three hundred years in building. It was about one hundred and five *gaz* high. He demolished it. From thence he proceeded to Ujjain, where there was a temple of Maha-kal, which he destroyed as well as the image of Bikramajit, who was king of Ujjain, and reigned 1316 years before his time. The Hindu era dates from his reign. Some other images cast in copper were carried with the stone image of Maha-kal to Dehli (Elliot and Dowson Vol. II: 328).

Abd-al Qadir Badauni (1540-1605) also recorded the destruction of the temple by Iltutmish (Badauni Vol. I: 95).

Around the same time, Abul Fazl observed the continued sacredness of the site,

> (Ujjain) is regarded as a place of great sanctity and wonderful to relate at times the river (Shipra) flows in waves of milk. The people prepare vessels and make use of it and such occurrence brings good fortune to the reigning monarch ... (*Ain-i-Akbari* Vol. II 1927: 207).

REBUILT BY PESHWAS

The temple was rebuilt by devotees over the centuries, but repeatedly fell prey to iconoclastic zeal. As a consequence, no part of the pre-twelfth century temple could be identified with certainty (Willis 1988: 276). The present temple was built at the same site by Ramachandra, Diwan of the Peshwa in 1745 CE (Pl. 27) (Patil 1952: 141). From the eighteenth century also the *mahakumbh,* Simhastha began to be held at Ujjain every twelve years. It paid singular reverence to the Mahakaleshwar *jyotirlinga* (Hiuen Tsang in the seventh century CE described a great congregation of pilgrims at the confluence of rivers at Prayaga (Beal 1884 Book V: 233-234); Captain Thomas Hardwicke presented the first English account of the Kumbh Mela at Haridwar, in 1796).

The memory of Mahakaleshwar had remained undimmed over time; the present structure was built almost five centuries after the destruction by Iltutmish.

KHAJURAHO

Khajuraho, known in ancient times as Vatsa and in the medieval period as Jejakabhukti, now forms part of Chhatarpur district, Madhya Pradesh. The antiquity of the site went back to prehistoric times, as artefacts of the Middle and late Stone Age, and Neolithic sites were excavated there. The region acquired importance under local chieftains of the Chandella family, who acknowledged the supremacy of the Pratiharas of Kanauj. By the mid-tenth century, however, the Chandellas had thrown off Pratihara yoke and became an independent power (Desai 2001: 7).

More than sixty-five inscriptions of the Chandellas, who ruled over Jejakabhukti (Bundelkhand) from circa 831 to 1308 CE, have been found. They traced their ancestry to the sage Chandratreya, who in turn descended from mythical sacred personalities, Marici and Atri (Chattopadhyaya 1993: 38-41). Several historians suggested possible tribal origins of the Chandellas, who had connections with Gonds and Bhars, and worshipped the tribal deity, Maniya Devi (Sinha 2004: 338).

Alberuni, who accompanied Mahmud Ghaznavi in his campaigns against Kalinjar in 1022 CE, referred to the region as Jejahuti with Kajuraha as its capital (Alberuni Vol. I 1910: 202). Tradition has it that the capital was so called as one of the city gates was decorated with two golden *khajur* (date palm) trees. Chand Bardai, in his *Prithviraja-raso*, called Khajuraho Khajurapura or Khajjinapura.

The Chandellas were great builders and connoisseurs of the arts and letters. Khajuraho was their religious capital, and Mahoba, sixty km away, their political headquarters. The Khajuraho temples, lakes, and gardens were built concurrently by Chandella kings, their chiefs, and Jain merchants between 950 and 1050 CE. Eighty-five temples spread over twenty square km were believed to have existed at the site, of which just twenty-five have survived. The shrines built by kings and nobles were situated in the western area near the Sibsagar lake, those constructed by Jain merchants were to the east of Khajuraho village (Elgood 1999: 146).

The temples belonged to Shaiva, Vaishnava, and Jain communities,[1] but all shared the same architectural and sculptural themes. So much so, that excluding a few features like the images instated for worship, there was little to distinguish a Vaishnava temple from a Shiva or Jain shrine (Deva 1990: 14).

Mahmud Ghaznavi, who invaded Kalinjar in 1019 and 1022 CE, does not appear to have passed through Khajuraho. Qutubuddin Aibak attacked the Chandella kingdom in 1203 CE and seized the fort of Kalinjar after defeating the last important ruler of the dynasty, Parmardideva (1165-1203 CE). Following this, Chandella power declined.

IBN BATTUTA DESCRIBED DESTRUCTION AT KHAJURAHO

The Moroccan traveller, Ibn Battuta (1304-1369) who visited Khajuraho in 1335, provided the earliest record of Muslim iconoclasm at the site. He wrote that at Kajarrti,

> ...there is a great pond about a mile in length near which are temples containing idols which the Muslims have mutilated. In the centre of that pond there are three cupolas of red stone, each of three storeys; and at the four corners of the pond are cupolas in which live a body of the *jogis* who have clotted their hair and let them grow so that they become as long as their bodies and on account of their practicing asceticism their colour had become extremely yellow. Many Musalmans follow them in order to take lessons from them. It is said that, whoever is subjected to diseases like the leprosy or elephantiasis lives with them for a long period of time and is cured by the permission of God (Ibn Battuta 1953: 166).

The valuable account confirmed that several temples of red stone located around a huge pond (the Sibsagar tank near the western group of temples) had ascetics residing in them, and that the images had been mutilated by Muslims. The temples suffered further damage at the hands of Sikandar Lodi in 1495 CE. But the remoteness of the site prevented sustained destruction. Nonetheless, Khajuraho was reduced to an inconsequential village and was not even mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari,* which described the nearby fort-town of Kalinjar (*Ain-i-Akbari* Vol. III 1927: 59). [A Sanskrit poem on

Shiva and Parvati, composed by Parmardideva was inscribed in a temple there].

KHAJURAHO REDISCOVERED

Khajuraho became known to the world in the nineteenth century. On 3rd Feb 1813, Lieutenant William Price presented a paper at the Asiatic Society of Bengal on a Sanskrit inscription found at Mau near Khajuraho, which made historians aware of the Chandella dynasty. In 1818, Khajuraho (Kajrow) was mentioned in a map prepared by an Englishman, Franklin who passed through the area. In 1839, the British surveyor, T.S. Burt learnt of Khajuraho from local guides and recorded his impression,

> It was whilst I was on my return trip from Eraw to Sangor that I heard from a palky bearer of the wonders of this place – Khajrao, near Chatpore, as he called it... [I] reached the temples at seven or eight in the morning... I found in the ruins of Khajrao seven large Diwallas, or Hindoo temples, most beautifully and exquisitely carved... I was much struck with the beauty of the inner roofs of the temples which were circular, and carved in a most elaborate style...
>
> ... the lingam, which is to be seen in another temple [the Matangeshvara]... The natives objected to my going inside, without taking off my boots, which would have been inconvenient; so standing at the doorway, I saw a bearer measuring the height with my walking stick... I understand that a light is regularly kept burning there during the night time, and it was considered by far the largest lingam in India, and is consequently much venerated.
>
> ... before finally taking leave of the seven temples, I shall state my opinion, that they are most probably the finest aggregate number of temples congregated in one place to be met with in all India, and all are within a stone's throw of one another (Burt 1840: 162-167).

Burt briefly noticed the Visvanatha, Nandi, Lakshmana, Varaha, and Matangesvara[2] temples, of which the last was still in active worship. He copied Dhanga's stone inscription, dated 1002 CE, which was lying loose at the Visvanatha temple.

The earliest drawings of the Khajuraho temples were prepared in 1852 by Charles Frederick Maisey (1825-1892). He also described the antiquities at the Chandella fort of Kalinjar.[3] A more systematic report of Khajuraho was presented by Alexander Cunningham, who visited the site first in 1852 and later in 1864-65, as Archaeological Surveyor to the Government of India. He made a detailed survey of the area, including its temples, mounds, loose images, and inscriptions. His accounts were published in the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) Reports, Vols. II, VII, X, and XXI, issued between 1871 and 1885. He recognized the importance of the site and declared that the area contained "perhaps the largest group of costly Hindu temples that is now to be found in Northern India." He reported that the temples were secretly used by *yogis* and thousands of Hindus during Shivratri.

The first local ruler to show interest in preserving the Khajuraho temples was the Maharaja of Chattarpur, Pratap Singh (1816-1854). He carried out extensive repairs of the temples between 1843 and 1847. Raja Deen Dayal was among the first to photograph the temples in 1882 and 1886. His photographs were published in Sir Lepel Griffin's *Famous Monuments of Central India* in 1886. In 1892, Franz Kielhorn published some major inscriptions of Khajuraho in the first volume of *Epigraphia Indica*. In 1904, the ASI introduced a systematic conservation programme for Khajuraho as per a plan prepared by Sir John Marshall and Henry Cousens (Desai 2001: 4-5).

THE LAKSHMANA TEMPLE

The credit for establishing the Chandellas as an independent power went to Yasovarman (r. 925-950). He built the

Lakshmana (Vaikuntha) temple at Khajuraho, which symbolized the enhanced power of the Chandellas "marching from chieftainship to kingship" (Desai 1996: 99). An inscription on the temple proclaimed Yasovarman's conquest of the strategic fort of Kalinjar. It was from then that he started to call himself 'Lord of Kalanjar' (Desai 2001: 10).

The Lakshmana (Vaikuntha) temple was the first in the Nagara style at Khajuraho, and one of the most well planned temples in all of India (Desai 2001: 50). The finely grained sandstone used in the construction of the temple came from the nearby quarries of Panna.

Yasovarman constructed the Lakshmana temple for a revered image of Vaikuntha Vishnu he had obtained from the Pratihara ruler, Devapala. It was consecrated by his son Dhangadeva in 954 CE, according to a detailed inscription now fixed on the temple porch (Desai 1996: 99). An open pavilion with a pyramidal roof in front of the Lakshmana temple enshrined one of the most powerful images of the Varaha incarnation of Vishnu. Carved out of a single piece of solid yellow sandstone, it measured 2.66m by 1.75m. On its body were carved more than 675 miniature figures in twelve rows, representing deities of the Hindu pantheon. The image, dated around 950 CE, was likely installed by Yasovarman to celebrate his victory over his Pratihara overlord (Desai 2001: 49).

THE INSCRIPTION

The Lakshmana (Vaikuntha) temple inscription was found around 1843 CE amidst the ruins of the temple, and was subsequently embedded in the wall inside the entrance porch (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. I: 122-135). It was in Sanskrit and, excluding the introductory blessing and the concluding portion of line 28, was in verse (Pl. 28). The forty verses were composed by poet Madhava, son of grammarian Dedda. The inscription was written by the *karanika* (writer of legal documents), Jaddha of the Gauda country and was dated, 'in the year 1011,' Vikrama era, i.e. 953-54 CE. It appeared to have been put up after the death of Yasovarman, for Verse 44 mentioned his son, Dhangadeva.

Verses 42 and 43 described the construction of the Vaikuntha Vishnu temple by Yasovarman. Verse 43 stated that Yasovarman received the image of Vaikuntha from Devapala, son of Herambapala. Herambapala had obtained the image from Sahi, the king of Kira, who in turn had got it from the lord of Bhota, who had acquired it from Kailasa.

Devapala was the ruler of Kanauj. The Kiras were identified with the Kasmiras, though the *Brihatsamhita* XIV 29 listed them separately as a people inhabiting the north-east, together with the Kasmiras. Bhota was modern Tibet (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. I: 122-124).

The inscription showed the importance of the Vaikuntha image and its links with the Himalayan region and Kashmir. Vaikuntha was worshipped in those regions by the followers of Pancharatra of the Kasmiragama or Tantrantara School. They worshipped the multi-headed Vishnu in the form of Vaikuntha. Although in its earlier stage the Pancharatra cult was non-Vedic, it later incorporated Vedic elements. Khajuraho in the tenth century represented that phase of Pancharatra. The inscription at the Lakshmana temple supported *Trayidharma* of the Vedas and prosperity of Brahmins (Desai 1996: 99-100).

IMAGE MISSING

In a landmark work, Devangana Desai argued that the three-faced Vaikuntha image in the sanctum of the Lakshmana temple was not the one installed by Yasovarman. She pointed out that Captain Burt did not see the inscription in 1838, which was reportedly found in the ruins at the base of the temple, when it was being repaired by the Maharaja of Chhatarpur (after 1843). The inscription was then placed at the entrance porch of the temple, as Alexander Cunningham observed during his visit in 1864. The inscription dated vs 1011(954 CE) was in harmony with the sculptural and architectural features of the temple (Desai 1996: 211).

Desai analysed Verses 1 and 43, which provided information on the Vaikuntha image installed by Yasovarman. As per her reading, Verse 1 implied that the image had the Kapila face, the fourth face, at the back (besides the faces of the Boar and Lion in front). The 43rd verse clearly stated that the Vaikuntha image installed by Yasovarman was not a Chandella sculpture. It had been previously obtained by Bhotanatha, the king of Bhota or Tibet, from the Kailasa region. It was gifted to the Sahi king of Kira (the Kangra region near Kashmir), as a token of friendship. Herambapala (Pratihara) obtained from the Sahi king by force (*bala*), "a force of elephants and horses." Yasovarman acquired it from his son, Hayapati Devapala, and installed (*pratishtha*) it in the temple (Desai 1996: 212-213).

From the verse it would appear that the image was portable, as it was shifted numerous times. Desai argued that the image was possibly of metal or precious material like other images of Vaikuntha in Kashmir and Himachal. She pointed to two valuable images of Aniruddha, one of pearl stone and the other of silver, worshipped in the Sas (Bahu) temple of Gwalior, according to an inscription of 1093 CE.

According to Desai, at some stage the four-faced Vaikuntha image of Yasovarman went missing, like the emerald *linga* installed by Yasovarman's son Dhanga in the Shiva-Marakatesvara (Visvanatha) temple in 999 CE[4] (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. I: 137-147). Both the emerald *linga* and the prized four-faced Vaikuntha image had disappeared well before Cunningham's first visit, in 1852 (Desai 1996: 214).

Desai argued that the three-faced stone image of Vaikuntha presently in the sanctum of the Lakshmana temple, could not be the one acquired by Yasovarman as 1) it was heavy and could not be easily carried to distant places without damage;

2) it was of Chandella workmanship, and differed in its style, facial features, physique, dress, crown, and jewellery from images of the Kashmir and Himachal regions (Pl. 29).

Furthermore, the Kashmir and Himachal Vaikuntha images had a tiny figure of Prithvi (Earth Goddess) emerging between the legs of the deity with her palms partly placed under the feet of Vaikuntha, as per the injunctions of the *Vishnudharmottara Purana* (85, 6-7). However, the Vaikuntha image in the Lakshmana temple had a snake-hooded goddess Prithvi seated in *padmasana* below the feet of the god, as in the case of the Hari-Hara, Vamana, and Vishnu images at this and other sites in Central India, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, but not in Kashmir and Chamba (Desai 1996: 214).

Importantly, there was a four-faced Vaikuntha image at the Khajuraho Site Museum with a figure of Prithvi (broken) emerging between the feet of the god, as in the case of Kashmir and Himachal images. That image was of Khajuraho workmanship, and stylistically belonged to the tenth century. It was likely that the Khajuraho sculptor who made it, had seen the image Yasovarman had acquired, and tried to depict Prithvi in that style. That could explain the departure from the usual representation of the snake-hooded goddess below the feet of Vishnu (Vaikuntha) in the images of Khajuraho and its neighbourhood (Desai 1996: 214).

Desai additionally pointed out, the three-faced stone image of Vaikuntha presently in the Lakshmana temple, stylistically belonged to the period circa 1075-1100 CE, i.e. about 125 years after the construction of the Lakshmana temple. It seemed to have been installed after Yasovarman's valuable image went missing, perhaps taken away by an invader (Desai 1996: 214-215).

The Vaikuntha image presently in the temple was a beautiful sculpture, made with great care. The tranquil countenance signified *bhakti* (devotion), emphasized in playwright Krishna Misra's *Prabodha Chandrodaya*, which was possibly staged when Kirtivarman Chandella (c. 1060-1100 CE) regained supremacy from the Chedi king, Lakshmikarna sometime around 1065.

NEW IMAGE INSTATED

Between 1035 and 1065, the fort of Kalinjar (fifty miles from Khajuraho) was occupied by the Chedis. The allegorical play, *Prabodha Chandrodaya,* in its Prologue referred to Kirtivarman and made symbolic use of the words "Kirti" and "Karna." It contained prayers addressed to Vaikuntha (Act IV). Desai was of the view that the present Vaikuntha image was perhaps installed at the time of the resurrection of Chandella power. That was also the time when Pancharatra Vaishnava worship was prevalent in the neighbourhood at Gwalior, where a temple of Aniruddha-Vaikuntha was completed in 1093 CE. Somewhat later, in 1104 CE (VS 1161), Bhattaraka Sri Prabhakardeva had some work done in the Lakshmana temple. An inscription of that date was carved on the south-eastern subsidiary shrine of the Lakshmana temple. The Vaikuntha image in the Lakshmana temple was likely installed during that period of renovation and resurgence (Desai 1996: 216-217).[5]

THAT BHAILLASVAMI TEMPLE AT BHILSA

An important temple at Bhilsa was dedicated to the Sun god, That Bhaillasvami. Bhilsa was a later corruption of Bhailla or Bhailasvamin, Bhayillasvamin, Bhaillasvami or Bhailasvamin, which was originally the name of an image of the Sun-god worshipped there. Fitz-Edward Hall noticed an inscription at Bhilsa in the mid-nineteenth century which had the passage – *Bhayillasvami-nama ravir=avatu bhuvah svaminam Krsnarajam.* That showed that Bhayillasvamin was regarded a representation of Ravi, or the Sun-god, and the record was incised in the time of the Rashtrakuta king, Krishna III (939-968 CE) (Sircar 1971: 115).

EARLY HISTORY OF TEMPLE

The date of the construction of the temple of Bhayillasvami was unclear. A stone inscription in Gwalior Museum, recovered from Mahalghat at Bhilsa contained the earliest known mention of the temple of Bhayillasvamin. It recorded a donation by a merchant of the Paravada *jati*, named Hatia, in favour of Narayana and the Mothers at Sri Bhaillasvamyayatana. The inscription was significant as it referred to the temple at Bhilsa as early as 878 CE (Sircar 1971: 117-121).

Two stone inscriptions in the local collections of antiquities were originally embedded in the walls of the Bhailasvamin temple. The first inscription was severely damaged. But, D.C. Sircar could decipher *ambaracudamani*, 'the crest-jewel of the sky,' a poetic description of the Sun; and also, *'vihaya'*, open space or sky. Along with the introductory invocation *om namah suryaya*, it was apparent that the damaged record was associated with the Sun temple. The inscription also contained the word *udayagiri*, literally 'sun-rise mountain' (Sircar 1971: 121-122).

The second inscription of the twelfth century CE, also damaged, appeared to be a *stuti* of the Sun-god. It was composed by Chittapa, who was given the title *mahakavicakravarti*. He was probably a court poet of the Paramara king Bhoja, who had quoted six stanzas of Chittapa's work in his *Sarasvatikanthabharana* (Sircar 1971: 122-125).

Bhaillasvami's repute as the leading deity in the region was noticed by Alberuni, who described the city of Bhailsan as "a place most famous among the Hindus" and "the name of the town is identical with [that of] the idol worshipped there" (Alberuni 1910: 202).

PULLED DOWN BY ILTUTMISH

The fame of the temple eventually drew the attention of the Sultans of Delhi who attacked Bhilsa and pulled down the temple in two campaigns, the first in 1234 CE, and the second in 1292. According to Minhaj Siraj, in 632 AH, in the time of Iltutmish,

> ... the army of Islam (marched) towards Malwa and took the fort and city of Bhilsa. There was a temple there which was three hundred years in building. It was about one hundred and five *gaz* high. He demolished it (Elliot and Dowson Vol. II: 328).

Six decades later, the temple was attacked again. According to Badauni, in 1292 during the reign of Jalaluddin Khalji, his nephew Alauddin, Governor of Kara, obtained permission,

> ... to proceed to Bhilsa and attacked that country and brought much booty thence to present to the Sultan, and the idol which was the object of worship of the Hindus he caused to be cast down in front of the gate of Badaun to be trampled upon by the people (Badauni Vol. I: 236).

TEMPLE SITE RELOCATED

So thorough was the destruction of the temple, that even its location was lost to memory. In the twentieth century, Michael Willis, historian at the British Museum, located the exact site of the temple after an exhaustive study of the available evidence and extensive field work in the area. According to him, Sircar's decipherment of the first inscription seemed a direct reference to Udayagiri, for it suggested that the temple of Bhaillasvami once stood on the hill.

Udayagiri comprised two large sandstone hills joined in the middle by a low ridge. Willis identified the precise spot of the temple which was marked by a substantial mound on the central ridge. The mound was covered with decayed brick and assorted stone fragments, including an *amalasaraka*, used to crown temples in north India (found at the site of the Bhaillasvami temple, it was now with the Department of Oriental Antiquities, British Museum). Nearby, in a collection of images at an open-air shrine, was a broken torso of Surya dating to the eleventh century. On the banks of the Betwa, a few hundred metres distant, on another mound were more pieces, including a battered relief with rearing horses. That formed the base of a Surya image (Willis 2001: 48-49). Meera Dass and Michael Willis also noticed hundreds of small chips of reddish-brown sandstone scattered across the central part of the ridge. These fragments established that the Sultans of Delhi literally smashed the temple to bits (Dass and Willis 2002: 34-37).

From the inscription deciphered by Sircar, the temple was in existence in the time of the Pratihara rulers and received large donations. Considerable work on the Sun temple was done in the reign of Mihir Bhoja (c. 836-85), as was verified by a large sculpture of Surya preserved in the Archaeological Museum at Bhilsa. It was likely a central part of the Bhaillasvami temple and could have occupied one of the cardinal niches. Inscriptions from the Paramara times confirmed the increasing importance of the Sun temple (Willis 2001: 47).

THE UDAYAGIRI LION CAPITAL

Alexander Cunningham first reported on the Lion Capital Pillar found near the Udayagiri caves,

> Immediately over the caves there is a large square platform, besides which I found the bell capital of a large pillar surmounted by a lion (Cunningham "Udaygiri or Udayagiri," ASIR 10 1874-77: 101).

The Lion Capital Pillar was shifted to the Archaeological Museum in Gwalior in 1927-28 (Pl. 30). Michel Willis' careful study of early photographs showed that the Lion Capital was discovered lying just a few meters from the Sun temple mound (Willis 2001: 49). According to Meera Dass and Michel Willis, it earlier stood at a mound about ten metres from where it was found. Other miscellaneous fragments suggested that the

Lion Pillar was surrounded by a *vedika*, similar to those depicted in early relief sculpture. The Heliodorus pillar located nearby belonged to the same era. As they pointed out, several columns were raised at important cult sites around Vidisha. Some were at Buddhist monasteries, the Heliodorus pillar was next to a Bhagavat temple, and at least one was at a *yaksa* cult-spot (Dass and Willis 2002: 26-31).

The Lion Capital dated to the second century BCE, and demonstrated the special significance of Udayagiri at least from then on. Dass and Willis tentatively concluded that the Lion Capital could have been related to the earliest form of Bhaillasvami who, in the second century BCE, was probably an autochthonous deity. The erection of the Pillar next to the Sun temple confirmed that the hill, and specifically the ridge, had astronomical significance as the Tropic of Cancer passed directly over it. It also attested that Vedic astronomy was extant in Central India in the second and first century BCE (Dass and Willis 2002: 33-37).

BIJAMANDAL OR VIJAYA MANDIR TEMPLE AT BHILSA

The antiquity of this region went back to Neolithic/Chalcolithic times. In the Mauryan period, it was known as Besnagar and Vidisha. The Udayagiri caves of the Gupta era were located five km from Vidisha. In the post Gupta period, the town of Bhilsa acquired greater standing than Udayagiri. That was evident from the ruins of the massive Bijamandal temple in Bhilsa (near Khajuraho) (Pl. 31). Its remnants showed that it must have been "a building of considerable merit" (Luard 1908: 201).

An inscription on a pillar referred to the Paramara king, Naravarman (c. 1093-1134) (Pl. 32). The temple seemed to have been constructed in the second half of the eleventh century, in the time of the Paramaras (Patil 1952: 18). A short hymn in praise of goddess Charchika inscribed on a pillar in the temple suggested that the original temple was dedicated to her (*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* Vol. 7 No. 36), and perhaps also to

Shiva. There was a long-standing tradition of goddess worship in the region (Willis 2001: 46).

The inscription did not mention the builder of that massive temple. But a clue was provided by the Shiva temple at Bhojpur, which housed the largest *linga* in India. If completed, the Bhojpur Shiva temple would have been larger than the Kandariya Mahadev temple, the largest at Khajuraho. Over one thousand and three hundred masons' marks, including the names of about fifty masons, could be seen on portions of the main temple, at the quarries, and on two other Jain and Shiva shrines in the village. The incomplete Bhojpur Shiva temple had no dedicatory inscription, but the name of the locality linked it to king Bhoja. That association was validated by a massive Jain image in a shrine not far from the Bhojpur Shiva temple, which had inscribed an inscription, Bhoja *[rajadhi] rajaparamesvara Bhojadeva* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* Vol. 7 No. 17).

Merutunga, in his *Prabandhacintamani* (1305), wrote that Bhoja bestowed on the poet Magha "all the merit of the new Bhojasvamin temple, that he was about to build himself..." (Tawney1901: 48-49). That affirmed Bhoja was the builder of the Bhojpur Shiva temple, which could have been a memorial shrine for him (Mankodi 1988: 101-112). The close connection between Bijamandal and Bhojpur was established by the huge base-mouldings, sculptural remnants, and iconographic features common to both. Possibly, the two monuments had the same architects and masons.

TEMPLE DESTROYED – HINDUS CONTINUED TO VISIT SITE

The Bijamandal mandir was destroyed on orders of Aurangzeb in 1682 CE and a mosque built on its ruins. Alexander Cunningham, who visited Bhilsa in 1874 and 1876, wrote of the temple,

> Inside the town there is a stone Masjid called Bijay Mandir, or the temple of Bijay. The Hindu name is said to have been

> derived from the founder of the original temple, Bijay Rani. The temple was destroyed by the order of Aurangzeb, and the present Masjid was erected in its place; but the Hindus still frequent it at the time of the annual fair. By the Muhammadans it is called the Alamgiri Masjid, while Bhilsa itself is called Alamgirpur (Cunningham *ASI Reports* X 1880: 35).

Of the mosque built over that temple, the ASI recorded,

> This mosque is built on the site of, and in the main with the materials of a large old Hindu temple. The plinth of the temple is still to be seen underneath the mosque. Most of the numerous pillars, pilasters and lintels used in the building are carved in the Hindu and Jain style of the medieval period, and some also bear Sanskrit inscriptions. No doubt is thus left that the major portion of the materials with which the mosque is constructed were taken from one or more older temples. An inscription on one of the pillars mentions a temple of the goddess Charchika, which was perhaps identical with the demolished temple on the site of which the mosque now stands. The old temple, it is said, was built by Vijaya, a Baniya lady. This perhaps explains the reason why the mosque still goes by the Hindu name of Bijay mandal, which is nothing but a corrupt form of *Vijaya-mandira* (*ARASI* 1921-22: 41).

A.P. Sagar, Superintending Archaeologist of the ASI, who examined the site found that six pillars at the rear corners of the mosque "still exist in situ." Sculptures would have been placed in the cardinal niches, which were now empty. A beautiful dancing Ganesh in standing posture, found buried upside-down nearby, could have occupied one of the niches (Sagar 2010: 40, 43).

SCULPTURES UNVEILED BY RAINS

In 1991, heavy rains washed away the wall that concealed the frontage of the mosque. A large number of sculptural pieces, some as high as eight feet, were brought to light. They had been buried under a platform on the northern side, which was used as the Hall of Prayer, especially during Eid. The statues had remained concealed from the time of the destruction of the Bijamandal temple, almost three centuries earlier. The huge cache left the Archaeological Survey of India with little option but to excavate the site. However, it soon received instructions to stop all work. The name of the mosque, Bijamandal mosque, preserved its Hindu association.

BHOJASHALA AT DHAR

Bhojashala was a centre of Sanskrit learning associated with the Paramara king, Bhoja (Pl. 33). The shrine of Saraswati – the goddess of learning – was believed to have been located in its precincts. Bhoja ascended the throne around 1005 CE (when he was 15 years old) and as per the *Mandhata* grant died in or before VE 1112 (1055-56 CE) (Choudhary 1954: 96-103). The most extensive account of his reign was presented by Merutunga, in his historical narrative, the *Prabandhacintamani*.

In the early twentieth century, the mosque next to the tomb of Kamal al-Din Chishti (circa 1238-1330) in Dhar was identified as the Bhojashala. The mosque was built mostly of temple parts. It was not known when the mosque was constructed. But an inscription dated 1392-93 CE in a neighbouring graveyard stated that the mosques of Dhar were in poor condition and were repaired by Dilawar Khan (*muqti* of Dhar). That meant that the mosque next to Kamal al-Din's tomb was the first Jami mosque constructed soon after Dhar was annexed to Delhi, sometime before 1313. The repairs would have been carried out at the beginning of Dilawar Khan's governorship (Willis 2012: 134-135).

The pillars in the mosque and the many inscribed tablets on the floor and walls demonstrated that materials for its construction came from several temple sites (Pl. 34). Merutunga described Bhoja's visits to the temple of Saraswati,

> ... then the king was in the habit of going continually to worship his family goddess that was set up in a temple in a suburb of the city of Dhara... (*Prabandhacintamani* 1899: 70).

At some point the Saraswati image went missing. In 1924, O.C. Gangoly and K.N. Dixit found an inscribed sculpture in the British Museum and declared it to be the lost Saraswati from Dhar. However, noted archaeologist Kirit Mankodi identified the statue as the Jain Yakshi, Ambika. Bhoja was known to have patronized Jain monks and scholars (Mankodi 1980-81: 96-101).

Willis suggested that kings from Western India (Solanki and Vaghela rulers), who frequently attacked Dhar, took away the image and installed it in a new temple in Saurashtra, not far from Somnath (Willis 2012: 148).

LAT MASJID – DHAR

Kamal al-Din's mosque was replaced in 1405 CE, when Dilawar Khan built Lat Masjid as the new Jami mosque at Dhar.[6] The Lat Masjid derived its name from the Iron Pillar or *lat* resting outside the building (Luard 1912: 10). Tradition attributed the Dhar Iron Pillar to Bhoja, who was well versed in iron metallurgy as is attested by his *Yuktikalpataru* (Tripathi 2008: 128). The pillar was double the height of the Delhi Iron Pillar and weighed at least one tonne more. It was the tallest and heaviest (7000 kg) pillar in the world (Tripathi 2008: 130).[7]

According to R. Balasubramaniam, the pillar must have had a *trishul* (trident) capital and was most likely placed in front of a Shiva temple. The temple would in all probability have been named Latesvara, after *Latesvara Mandala*, the name of this region. The use of the word *lat* (pillar) in the name Lat Masjid reinforced that view. The temple would have existed at the very site where Lat Masjid stands. The masonry basement where the stone boulders could be seen must have been the original site of the Dhar Iron Pillar (Balasubramaniam 2008: 80-81, 90; Tripathi 2008: 128-130).

After the pillar was thrown down by Muslims, its shaft broke into at least two pieces, which lay around for a hundred years. One small piece (excluding the presently missing fourth piece) was placed in Dilawar Khan's mosque in Mandu (as was the Iron Pillar in front of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in Delhi). The larger piece was positioned in front of the Lat Masjid at Dhar (Pl. 35), constructed from Hindu and Jain temple parts (Fuhrer 1893: 21; Luard 1912: 11).

That piece remained there till 1531 CE, when Bahadur Shah of Gujarat defeated the Mandu ruling dynasty. Emperor Jahangir recorded that Bahadur Shah wanted to carry the pillar to Gujarat, and in the process it fell and broke into two pieces,

> Outside this fort (of Dhar) there is a Jami Masjid and a square pillar lies in front of the Masjid with some portions embedded in the ground. When Bahadur Shah conquered Malwa, he was anxious to take the pillar with him to Gujarat. In the act of digging out, it fell down and was broken into two pieces (one piece 22′ long and the other 13′). I (Jahangir) have seen it lying on the ground carelessly and so ordered the bigger piece to be carried to Agra, which I hope to be used as a lamp-post in the courtyard of my father's (Akbar's) tomb (*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* 1909: 406-408).

His orders don't seem to have been carried out as the piece remained at Dhar (Luard 1912: 11).

In 1598 CE, Akbar stayed for a week at Dhar, while overseeing the invasion of the Deccan. His visit was recorded in an inscription in Persian on the Dhar Pillar (Luard 1912: 11). The manner in which the inscription was inscribed led Henry Cousens to conclude that the pillar was then on the ground and not erect. Cousens also observed that the names and letters in Devanagari on the largest piece of the pillar had been engraved before it first fell (Cousens 1902: 205-212).

The largest piece (i.e., the one that Jahangir measured as 22′) remained in the same position from the time it fell in 1531 CE till the ASI removed it around 1980 CE, and placed horizontally on a platform adjoining the mosque.

R. Balasubramaniam proposed that the missing fourth piece could be the Iron Pillar standing in front of the Jami Masjid in Mandu. That pillar was called Alauddin's *Sang* (spear). Alauddin was the first Muslim ruler to plunder interior Malwa, and the first fall of the Dhar Iron Pillar most likely took place during his raids (Balasubramaniam 2008: 91-92).

ORCHHA – SEARCH FOR RAMA AND KRISHNA

In 1531 CE, Rudra Pratap, of a "spurious" Rajput clan of Bundelas, availed the political instability of the times to establish his capital at Orchha, on the banks of the Betwa River (Kolff 1990: 120-121).[8] Rudra Pratap and his descendants transformed Orchha into a thriving cultural centre, aided partly by the exodus of talent from nearby Gwalior consequent to the fall of the Tomar regime. Several architectural similarities have been noted between the buildings at Gwalior and Orchha. The Orchha court poet, Kesavdas stated that one of his ancestors had resigned from service of the Tomars for the Bundelas.

Rudra Pratap died within a year of founding his capital. He was succeeded by his eldest son, who died without an heir. His younger son, Madhukar Shah then ascended the throne (r. 1554-1592). Madhukar Shah maintained strong links with the Braj region, and patronized the poet Hariram Vyas, a bhakti saint who had probably settled in Braj in the 1530s or 1540s. Could this be interpreted as an attempt to acquire local legitimacy and an assertion of regional independence vis a vis the Mughals? (Pauwels 2009: 187-228).

During most of Akbar's reign, Madhukar Shah alternately collaborated with the Emperor and asserted his independence, "sponsoring a mixed ideology of *ksatriya* assertiveness and Bhakti" (Pauwels 2011: 219). The Orchha kingdom was twice attacked by Mughal forces, first in 1577, and then again in 1588. Madhukar Shah was forced to submit to Akbar and pay tribute (Richards 1993: 129). Hariram Vyas did not recommend open resistance to the Mughals, and instead counselled Madhukar Shah to bide his time as divine retribution was sure to come. In one poem he avowed that those "seated between the lion and lioness" (that is, Krishna and Radha) need not "fear the jackal" (Akbar?) (Pauwels 2009: 213-201).

Madhukar Shah was described as a person of "religious bent." It was said that he once waited on Akbar who,

> ... in order to try his piety, of which he had heard so much, issued an order prohibiting the wearing of a *mala* (rosary) or Hindu sect marks in durbar. Madhukar, however, came with both, the latter being painted on even more conspicuously than usual. Akbar was pleased at his courage and the particular mark the Raja wore on that day is called the *Madhukar Shahi Tika* to this day (Luard 1907: 18-19).

Madhukar Shah was a worshipper of Krishna while his queen, Ganesh Kunwari was a Rama devotee. She once journeyed to Ayodhya to obtain an image of Rama. Madhukar Shah began construction of the Chaturbhuj temple at Orchha for Rama as the chief deity (it was completed by his son, Bir Singh Deo).

Ganesh Kunwari found a statue of Rama in the Saryu River, and brought it back to Orchha (Luard 1907: 18). However, she decided to keep it in her palace, which was turned into the Raja Ram temple (Bunce 2006: 86-90). That was perhaps the only temple in the country where Rama was worshipped as king; he wore the turban of royalty, carried a sword in his right hand, and a shield in the left. A guard of honour was held for him every day. Sita wore a crown, and Lakshmana was dressed as a prince. An image of Vishnu was instated in the Chaturbhuj temple, originally built for Rama.[9]

Madhukar Shah died in 1592. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Ram Shah, but eventually Bir Singh Deo managed to occupy the throne. His rise began in 1602, when the Mughal prince, Salim (the future Jahangir) asked him to kill Abul Fazl, his father's confidant. Jahangir wrote in his autobiography, that when Abul Fazl was summoned from the Deccan by Akbar,

> It became necessary to prevent him from coming to Court. As Bir Singh Deo's country was exactly on his route and he was then a rebel, I sent him a message that if he would stop that sedition-monger and kill him he would receive every kindness from me. By God's grace, when Shaikh Abu-i-Fazl was passing through Bir Singh Deo's country, the Raja blocked his road, and after a little contest scattered his men and killed him. He sent his head to me in Allahabad (*Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* 1909: 25).

As Bir Singh had carried out Prince Salim's orders, he was made the ruler of Orchha when Jahangir ascended the throne. Jahangir wrote,

> "I promoted Raja Bir Singh Deo, a Bandela Rajput, who had obtained by favour, and who excels his equals and relatives in valour, personal goodness, and simple-heartedness, to the rank of 3000." He attributed "the reason for his advancement and for the regard shown to him" was his role in the murder of Abul Fazl (*Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* 1909: 24).

Though accepting Mughal hegemony, Bir Singh was eager to assert his kingly stature in his own region. His biography, *Virsimhdevcarit*, written by the finest court poet of Orchha, Kesavdas in 1607, was a long *vamsavali* (genealogy) that traced Bundela lineage to the Gahadavalas of Banaras, and ultimately to the solar dynasty of Rama. The Mughals were situated at the periphery in the *Virsimhdevcarit;* the Bundelas occupied centre stage. Bir Singh might have been a small player in the dominant Persian discourse; in Kesavdas's *kavya*, his was the stellar position (Busch 2014: 676-677).

Among the buildings Bir Singh constructed was the Jahangir Mahal, so-called as the Emperor reportedly stayed there for a day (Luard 1907: 81-82). Many of its interior walls were magnificently painted with scenes from Hindu lore, as well as courtly figures in Mughal style. The Chaturbhuj temple that he completed was later partially demolished on orders of Emperor Shah Jahan. The temple's interiors were possibly inspired by the Govindadeva temple, built by Raja Man Singh at Vrindavan in 1590 (Asher 1992: 163-164).

Bir Singh built the Keshav Deva temple at Mathura at the cost of an enormous 33 million rupees. Tavernier described it as "one of the most sumptuous buildings in all of India," visible from a distance of sixteen km (Tavernier 1889: Vol. I: 85, Vol. II: 175). It was "visited by the greatest concourse of pilgrims" (Growse 1874: 36, 117-120). The sanctum of this temple was also probably influenced by the Govindadeva temple (Asher 1992: 164). Bir Singh went on a pilgrimage to Mathura in 1614, where he had himself weighed in gold that, together with 81 other *maunds*, he distributed in charity. The balance with which he was weighed was kept at Vishrant Ghat, dedicated to Krishna (Luard 1907: 22). The temple was demolished in Aurangzeb's reign.

GWALIOR

JAIN IMAGES DESECRATED

The Mughal Emperor Babur may have refrained from mentioning the demolition of temples at Ayodhya and Sambhal, but he did write of his desecration of Jain statues he saw at Gwalior (Pl. 36),

> (Sep. 28th) Next day (Muh.13th) at the Mid-day Prayer we rode out to visit places in Gualiar we had not yet seen. We saw the imarat called Badalgar which is part of Man-sing's fort (*qila*), went through the Hati-pul and across the fort to a place called Urwa (Urwah), which is a valley-bottom (*qul*) on its western side....
>
> Three sides of Urwa are solid rock, not the red rock of Biana

> but one paler in colour. On these sides people have cut out idol-statues, large and small, one large statue on the south side being perhaps 20 *qari* (yds.) high. These idols are shewn quite naked without covering for their privities... Urwa is not a bad place; it is shut in; the idols are its defect; I, for my part, ordered them destroyed (*Babur Nama* 1922: 611-612).

C.E. Luard (1869-1927), Superintendent of Gazetteer in Central India, noted the extent of the damage Babur inflicted (Pl. 37),

> Gwalior is one of the Vidyasthanas or seats of learning of the Digambara Jains and the fort contains one small Jain temple to Parasnath, and the remains of another Jain temple, both of the twelfth century...The only really important Jain remains are the five great collection of figures carved on the face of the rock itself, which were all executed between 1440 and 1473 during the sway of the Tonwara dynasty. Some of the figures are colossal, one in the group near Urwahi gate being 57 feet high. Babur noticed this figure and adds that he ordered all of them to be destroyed, but, as a matter of fact, only some of those most easily were partially mutilated, while others were destroyed later on by Muhammadan governors of the fort, and a large number by the Public Works Department, who in 1869 broke them up for use as road metal (Luard 1908: 228).

TEMPLE OF GWALIPA RE-CLAIMED – GWALIOR

An inscription in Persian on a mosque near Gwalior Fort recorded that Motamid Khan, Governor of the Fort, converted the temple of Gwalipa into the mosque in 1664 to please his master, Aurangzeb. A tiny Hindu shrine next to the mosque dedicated to Gwalipa was constructed later by some pious Hindu, "as a memento of the shrine destroyed to make room for the mosque" (Luard 1908: 224).

Alexander Cunningham described Gwalipa as a holy hermit who gave the name Gwali-awar to the Fort (Cunningham 1885: 22). He was believed to have directed the legendary Suraj Sen to construct Gwalior Fort (Patil 1952: 53). On a visit to the site, Cunningham noted that the original location of the temple was "on the spot where the small Masjid now stands." He observed that "a light is kept constantly burning in the shrine ..." (Cunningham 1871: 335). Just opposite the shrine was a small plastered pillar, thickly studded with projecting receptacles for lights. That was called *Dip-wala* "or lamp pillar," and its lamps were lit once a year on the anniversary of the first festival of Gwalipa. The Persian inscription was still attached to the Masjid when Cunningham visited. It read,

> In the reign of the great Prince Alamgir,
> Like the full shining moon, the enlightener of the world.
> Praise be to God that this happy place
> Was by Motamid Khan completed as an alms.
> It was the idol temple of the vile Gwali,
> He made it a mosque like a mansion of Paradise.
> The Khan of enlightened heart, nay light itself from head to foot,
> Displayed the divine light, like that of mid-day.
> He closed the idol temple:
> Exclamations rose from earth to heaven,
> When the light put far away the abode of darkness,
> Hatif said 'light be blessed' (Cunningham 1871: 335).

That Mughal mosque was quietly turned into a temple sometime before 1980 (Willis 1996: 95).

NOTES

1. The Parsvanatha temple, the largest Jain shrine at Khajuraho, was built between 950 and 970 CE, in the time of Dhanga. It was originally dedicated to Adinath, but in 1860 the present image of Parsvanatha was installed (Desai 2001: 72-73).
2. The Matangesvara or Mritunjaya Mahadeva temple, dated to 1000 CE, enshrined one of the largest Shiva *lingas* in north India. It was 2. 53 m (8.3 feet) high and more than 1 metre in diameter. A similar *linga,* of about the same period, was found at Bhojpur, near Bhopal. Matangesvara was probably a

funerary monument to commemorate King Dhanga who, at the age of over one hundred years was recorded to have cast off his body at Prayag, meditating on Shiva (Deva 1990: 32-36). The temple was near the Sibsagar tank, called 'Sevamsagara' in inscriptions. It remains in use till this day. During Shivratri, devotees bathe in the Sibsagar tank and then proceed with a water pot to the Matangesvara temple. In the month of Kartik (November), women come to the banks of the Sibsagar early morning to worship Krishna (Desai 2001: 64-65, 70). One of the earliest inscribed images of Hanuman, 8.2 ft high, dated 922 CE also remains in worship.

3. Charles Frederick Maisey described evidence of Hindu worship he found at Kalinjar,
   "The hill of Kalinjar, called also Rabi chitr, from Rabi, the Sun, was beyond doubt, devoted to Hindu worship long before the erection of the Fort, for not only are the dates of inscriptions at the caves, and on the various sculptures earlier than those on the gates of the Fort, but in many places the rampart walls are in a great measure built with fragments of ornamental pillars, cornices, etc., which probably at the erection of the Fort were the remains of Hindu fanes of remote antiquity (Maisey 1848: 1).
4. Yasovarman's son, Dhangadeva (950-999 CE), was a worshipper of Shiva and instated two *lingas*, one made of emerald and the other of stone, in the Marakateshvara temple (Lord of Emerald), now known as the Vishvanatha temple. The temple was consecrated in 999 CE, after his death. A colossal statue of Bhairava, 6.5 feet high, of the early tenth century remains under worship (Desai 2001: 10, 64). Dhanga's grandson, Vidyadhara (1003-1035 CE) played an important role in mobilizing Indian rulers against Mahmud Ghaznavi. He built the most imposing temple at Khajuraho, Kandariya Mahadeva, around 1030 in celebration of his victory. It was affiliated to the Tantric Shaivite order, known as Shaiva Siddhanta.
5. Though Khajuraho has become synonymous with erotic sculpture, such figures comprised less than one-tenth of the images there (Desai 2001: 12).

6. Dhar, (or Dhara), the capital of medieval Malwa, was founded by Bhoja. It first came under Muslim control around 1300 CE when Alauddin Khilji subdued Malwa up to Dhar. Muhammad bin Tughlaq, who stopped at Dhar in 1344 CE, found it deserted due to a famine. Dilawar Khan was appointed governor of Dhar by Muhammad Shah Tughlaq (1390-1394). His son and successor, Hoshang Shah became the first Muslim king of Malwa.
7. On seeing the Dhar pillar, Vincent Smith wrote, "While we marvel at the skill shown by the ancient artificers in forging a great mass of Delhi pillar, we must give a still greater measure of admiration to the forgotten craftsmen who dealt so successfully in producing the still more ponderous iron mass of the Dhar pillar monument with its total length of 12801.6mm. It is the tallest iron pillar so far anywhere in the world (13310mm) weighing about 7000kg. The pillar is broken into three pieces" (Smith 1898: 143-146).
8. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Bundela Rajputs established their dominance in the region south of the Yamuna, between Gwalior in the west and Rewa in the east. The category of Bundela infantrymen were named after them, and a dialect of Hindi, *Bundeli* was derived from their capital (Kolff 1990: 120-121).
9. In an interview on 2nd June 2017, the present head of the Orchha house, Madhukar Shah said that according to the family tradition, Kunwari Ganesh went to Ayodhya to obtain *darshan* of Rama and bring back his image. When she failed in her mission, she entered the Saryu River to end her life. Her foot hit something and she called out to members of her entourage. They found an image of Rama as king. It was that image she brought back to Orchha.

9

Gujarat

HISTORY OF PATAN

Anahilavada-Pattan or Patan, one of the most prominent cities of Gujarat, was founded around 746 CE, by Vanraja. He belonged to the Chavada dynasty that ruled northern Gujarat from 690 to 942 CE. Anahilavada-Pattan also served as the capital of the Chaulukya/Solanki dynasty established by Mularaja in 942 CE. Muslim writers referred to the city as Nahrwara, Nahlwara or Naharwalah (Burgess and Cousens 1975: 33-34). They described it as large and impressive.[1]

Anahilavada-Pattan lay on the path of Mahmud Ghaznavi, who marched on Somnath in 1025 CE. Unprepared, the Solanki ruler Bhimadeva I (1022-1064 CE) retreated to Kutch. Anahilavada was left defenceless before the invader who ravaged it, and carried off much booty.

Bhimadeva re-occupied his capital after the departure of Mahmud and immediately commenced work on its restoration. Under Bhimadeva, his son Karnadeva (r. 1064-1092), and grandson Siddharaja (r. 1092-1142 CE), Anahilavada attained great splendour and the Solanki kingdom considerable prosperity. Karnadeva founded the town of Karnavati, while Siddharaja and his successor Kumarapala were renowned for their impressive architectural achievements.

In 1178 CE, Bhimadeva II became king, and that very year repulsed Muhammad Ghori's attack on his kingdom. In 1195, however, he was attacked by Muhammad Ghori's general, Qutubuddin Aibak, and defeated near Anahilavada. The city was again sacked by the invading forces. Immediately thereafter, Bhimadeva II, assisted by his feudatories Prahladana and Dharavarsha of Chandravati, the Mers, and the chief of Nagor, defeated Aibak and besieged him at Ajmer till he was rescued. In 1197, Aibak attacked Gujarat one more time and defeated Bhimadeva II. He again acquired control of Anahilavada, and then returned to Delhi.

A century later, in 1297-98 CE, Alauddin Khalji's generals, Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan Jalesari, invaded Gujarat, sacked the Somnath temple, defeated Karna, the last ruler of the short-lived Vaghela dynasty (successors to the Solankis), and captured Anahilavada.[2] Karna fled with his daughter Deval Devi, and took shelter with Ramachandra of Devagiri. Karna's queen Kamala Devi was sent to Alauddin. Deval Devi's chance capture (by troops on leave to visit the famous Ellora caves), and subsequent marriage to heir apparent, Khizr Khan were the subject of Amir Khusrau's *masnavi*, titled *Duval Rani va Khizr Khan* (Michell and Shah 1988: 8-9; Bird 1835: 161-162).

Gujarat became a province of the Delhi Sultanate and "the great architectural works of the Solanki and Vaghela kings were wilfully and maliciously dilapidated by Islam bigotry" (Burgess and Cousens 1975: 35-37). The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* (written by Ali Muhammad Khan, the last imperial Diwan of Gujarat) described the mosque constructed by Ulugh Khan (Alp Khan), Alauddin's brother-in-law, on appointment as governor of Gujarat (r. 1300-15),

> It is said that a lofty Masjid called Masjid-i-Adinah (Friday Masjid) of marble stone which exists even today is built by him. It is popular among common folk that error is mostly committed in counting its many pillars. They relate that it was a temple which was converted into a Masjid. In reality, it is a wonderfully lofty Masjid. .. Most of the relics and vestiges of magnificence and extension of the ancient prosperity of Pattan which are found in the shape of bricks and dried clay, which inform us about the truth of this statement, scattered nearly to a distance of three kurohs (one kush= two miles) from the present place of habitation. Marble stones, at the end of the rule of rajas, were brought from Ajmer for building temples in such a quantity that more than which is dug out from the earth even now. All the marble stones utilized in the city of Ahmedabad were (brought) from that place (*Mirat-i-Ahmadi* 1965: 29).

The author of the *Mirat* was incorrect in describing Adina masjid as an authentic Islamic structure. The mosque (built in 1300 CE) was just "a thousand or so richly ornamented pillars, pillaged from temples (that) were merely arranged in a mosque plan" (Michell and Shah 1988: 9; Bird 1835: 163-164). In fact, what was claimed to be the oldest Muslim building in Gujarat, the tomb of Shaikh Farid at Patan, was also merely a converted temple (Pl. 38). In the eighteenth century, when Patan came under Maratha control, they levelled Adina mosque (Cort 2001: 38-39).

After the devastation of the thirteenth century, there was extensive construction of temples in the early decades of the following century. The influential Jain community strongly objected to attacks on their sacred shrines. The governor, Alp Khan was keen to safeguard relations with Jain merchants for continued prosperity of the province. So Jains were authorised to rebuild their temples (Misra 1982: 68-70). The Jain poet, Ambadevasuri in his *Samararasu*, composed in 1315 CE, described the city as "New Pattan." In 1315, Alp Khan allowed Samaru Shah, the wealthy Jain merchant of Patan, to undertake renovation of the Shatrunjay temples. Samaru Shah led a large group of pilgrims to Shatrunjay under the leadership of Acharya Siddhasuri of the Upakesha Gaccha, and repaired the temples in a grand ceremony. The story of the renovation was told by Acharya Siddhasuri's disciple, Kakkasuri in *Nabhinandana Jinoddhara Prabandha* (Cort 2001: 38; Cort 2010: 148).

Subsequently, a representative of Delhi, Zafar Khan (the future Muzaffar Shah I, founder of the Muzaffarid Sultanate, r. 1391-1417) went to Patan and suppressed all signs of idolatry. He ravaged the Somnath temple and forced Hindus of the city to flee to Diu, "where he established Islam." Ahmad I (r. 1410-1442), grandson of Muzaffar Shah, founded the capital city, which still bears his name (Ray 2015: 76-78). During his reign, he focused on consolidating Islam, "by relentless iconoclasm and oppression of the Hindus" (Michell and Shah 1988: 9-10).[3]

After a few brief reigns, in 1458 CE, Mahmud Begada (Mahmud Shah I, r. 1458-1509), ascended the throne. He ruled for fifty-four years, during which the Gujarat Sultanate attained its greatest successes. From early on, he was "concerned to strengthen his dominions through the propagation of Islam." To fortify his position in Gujarat, he wanted Islam to be firmly entrenched in southern Rajasthan. The old Parsi settlement at Sanjan was also destroyed by him (Michell and Shah 1988: 10-11).

SUN TEMPLE AT MODHERA – WRECKED

Modhera, eighteen miles south of Patan, now a mere collection of huts, was once a place of consequence and the site of an exquisite Sun temple.[4] A small deserted masjid nearby was supported by eighteen pillars of Hindu temples (Burgess and Cousens 1975: 71).

The Sun temple, built in the early eleventh century CE by the Solanki king, Bhimadeva I, was an outstanding specimen of the architecture of that period. It stood on the left bank of the Pushpawati River, on a high platform of bricks. It comprised a shrine proper, the *garbhagriha;* a hall, the *gudhamandapa;* an outer assembly hall, the *sabhamandapa;* and a *kunda*, a sacred pool now called *Rama kunda*. The temple was the first in Gujarat to depict scenes from the *Ramayana* (on the walls, small flat ceilings, and lintels of the *sabhamandapa*) (Sankalia 1941: 84-91; Mankodi 2009: 179).

Colonel Monier-Williams, a military official, was the first to notice the temple in the course of his duties as Surveyor General. In his Journal in 1809, he described the structure as of rare elegance, and noted that its domes had been blown off by a Muslim prince,

> There is one of the finest specimens of ancient Hindu architecture at Mundera I ever saw. It is a pagoda very similar in structure to those of the present day; but ornamented so profusely that it is very evident the founder was determined to make it the most finished piece of work that it was possible for the compass of human art to effect ... All the upper part of it is supported on pillars, which are of an order the most elegant, and enriched with carved work of exquisite beauty, and which would be considered in this refined age as the conception of a correct taste, and the execution of a masterly hand. Innumerable figures cover most of the bases of the pillars, and a considerable portion of the exterior surface of the building... The domes were blown off, they say, by means of gunpowder ... by a Musalman prince. The lower circles remain, and are ornamented in a style of elegance that is uncommonly striking ... (Burgess and Cousens 1975: 71-72).

Thereafter, in 1856, British administrator A.K. Forbes wrote of the temple and the evidence of Muslim vandalism,

> ...It rose to the height of one story only, and consisted of an adytum, a closed mundup attached to it, an open mundup separated from the rest of the edifice. The spire has fallen,

> and the domes are no longer in existence; but the remainder of the building is nearly complete, although indentations are visible upon some of the columns, such as might have been made in wood by sharp weapons, to which the Mohummedans point as marks of the swords of the Islamicate saints ...The detached open mundup of the temple is now known under the name of 'Seeta Choree' or marriage hall, and the reservoir (now called the Ram Koond) is a celebrated place of pilgrimage for Vaishnavite ascetics (Forbes 1878: 195-196).

James Burgess and Henry Cousens were the first archaeologists to properly survey the temple (Pl. 39). They noted images of solar deities outside and inside, and identified it as a Sun temple. According to them, the structure had originally all the parts of a first-class temple, was built according to injunctions of the *shilpa shastras*, in good proportions, and richly decorated (Burgess and Cousens 1903: 71-81).[5] They stated that the *shikhara* was blown up,

> The Muhammadans, not content with defacing the figure sculptures of this Modhera temple, are said to have placed bags of gunpowder in the underground shrine, and blew it up with the upper cell, destroying the Sikhara or tower (Burgess and Cousens 1903: 74).

Further,

> The shrine is now a wreck: nothing but the bare walls remaining ... this must have been of two storeys... The floor separating them, with part of the roof, had fallen into the pit. On clearing out of the debris, the seat of the image of Surya was found in the middle of the floor, with other blocks connecting it with the side walls. On the front of the seat are carved seven horses (the *saptasva-vahana*) of the god, their fore-quarters projecting and prancing forward ... (Burgess and Cousens 1903: 75).

IMAGES UNDER WORSHIP IN RUINED TEMPLE

The archaeologists found the seat of the Sun god, with seven prancing horses, buried in the debris. [A photograph of the fragmentary pedestal of the main image of Surya with seven prancing horses that is still lying in an underground chamber below the sanctum has been published by Wibke Lobo (Lobo 1982: fig. 60)]. They also noted that to the north of the entrance was a large relief on the wall, which the villagers called Kaal-Bhairava, and anointed every week. Kirit Mankodi recorded worship continuing in December 2005 (Mankodi 2009: 195).

Nearby were three small figures – the first of a female holding a three-hooded snake in her upper left hand, the other hands destroyed; the second also a female, the four arms broken off and canopied by a five-hooded snake. The third was a male deity, his arms shattered and his head covered by a five-hooded snake. All three images were still worshipped by the villagers, and were smeared with red paint (Burgess and Cousens 1903: 77-78).

Cousens found on one of the blocks forming the back wall in the shrine, a date inscribed upside down, 'Vikrama Samvat 1083', i.e. 1026-27 CE. The date was two years after Mahmud Ghaznavi's attack on Somnath (Burgess and Cousens 1975: 81). The position of the inscription indicated the temple had been vandalized and reconstructed (Pl. 40).

THE RUDRAMAHALAYA

In 1140 CE, Jayasimha Siddharaja constructed th Rudramahalaya temple at Siddhpur, a prominent pilgrimag centre not only of Shaivas but also Jains. Many Jain monasti orders were based in the city (Cort 2001: 36-40). Jayasimh Siddharaja himself built a Jain temple at Siddhpur immediatel following the construction of the Rudramahalaya[6] (Cort 1998 89-94). The Rudramahalaya was one of the largest and mos important temple complexes in Gujarat.

In 1414 or early 1415 CE, Ahmad Shah besieged the city of Siddhpur. The *Mirat-i Sikandari*, the earliest available Persian text, related that the Sultan's forces rallied around the banner of Islam and desecrated the Rudramahalaya (Pl. 41) (*Mirat-i-Sikandari* 1961: 44-46).

Henry Cousens wrote of the splendour of the temple and recorded that its subsidiary shrines were converted into a congregational mosque (Pl. 42),

> ...to raise such a temple as had not been seen before – the famous Rudramala (the garland of Rudra or Siva), or Rudramahalaya (the abode of Rudra or Siva), the scanty, but colossal, ruins of which now remain embedded amongst the houses of the town, near the river bank. These remains consist of five columns of the front or eastern porch with their beams above them; four columns in two stories of the northern porch; four greater columns, also in two stories, which stood on the west side of the hall and before the shrine; and one kirttistambha, or arch of fame, the only one of a pair, in the courtyard at the north-east corner of the temple.
>
> In addition to these are fragments of some small subsidiary shrines at the back of the temple, which have been converted into a Muhammadan Masjid... It was, no doubt, the largest, or, at least, the second largest, in Gujarat, measuring about 145 feet by 103 feet, rising in, at least three stories. Another temple, which stood at Vadnagar, twenty miles to the south-east, may have been still larger, judging from the size of two kirttistambha now left, which are larger – 35 feet 6 inches high – than this temple. Such magnificent piles were not likely to escape the attentions of the Muhammadans in their first onslaughts upon Hinduism in this province, and in proportion to their grandeur was the complete destruction that overwhelmed them ... (Cousens 1926: 52-53).

In a novel interpretation, Alka Patel questioned the general assumption that Muslim principalities in northern India from the late twelfth century onwards were "primarily occupied with severing ties with their dynastic predecessors, especially if the latter were Hindus." In architectural history, that thesis suggested that Muslim Sultans carefully chose the sites of their desecration. She instead interpreted the Rudramahalaya/congregational mosque within both the architectural history of Islamic buildings in western India and the Maru-Gurjara style of temple architecture. According to her, the temple's fragments were given new contexts and functions in the mosque, which had a definite place in the Maru-Gurjara style of architecture. As practised in the region for at least three centuries, the western Indian style of mosque construction was "equally influential in the use and placement of the recycled materials" !! (Patel 2004: 148-152). It remains unclear how appreciative Hindu worshippers of the Rudramahalaya temple were of that newly evolved architectural style.

SHIVA *LINGA* UNEARTHED

In the 1970s, repair work at the site by the Archaeological Survey of India revealed rich sculptural carvings in the area of the mosque. Among the finds were a beautiful Shiva head; a Nandi; a Shiva *linga* embedded in the earth; a circular *yonipatta* fixed into the floor; a donor couple, likely Siddharaja and his queen; and a bearded male, again possibly Siddharaja, standing with folded hands in an gesture of supplication.

Reports of the finds led Hindus to demand the site no longer be permitted to be used as a mosque, or they be allowed to worship the Shiva *linga* found in the precincts. A riot broke out at Siddhpur in March 1980, when a group of Hindus, led by a local *sadhu*, started singing *bhajans* at the Rudramahalaya, and Muslims began to offer *namaz*. B.L. Nagarch, Superintending Archaeologist, wrote of the importance of the temple,

> ...as the obsequial offerings to the parental ancestors must be made at Gaya, so corresponding offerings to the maternal ancestors have to be performed at Sidhpur.

He added,

> the ancient name of Sidhpur appears to have been 'Sristhala or Sristhalaka and the name of Sidhpur was given to this place in honour of Siddharaja Jayasimha who completed the Temple of Rudra-Mahadeva in the twelfth century here (Goel 1991: 1-38).

Interestingly, Jayasimha Siddharaja had been a protector of Muslim places of worship in Gujarat, as recorded by Muslim chroniclers themselves. Muhmud Ufi narrated an incident, observing "he never heard a story to be compared to this." In Siddharaja's reign, there was a mosque and a minaret in the city of Cambay. Parsi settlers in the locality instigated local Hindus to attack the Muslims. The mosque was burnt and the minaret destroyed during the incident. Jayasimha Siddharaja personally investigated the complaints of Muslims of Cambay. He punished the Parsi and Hindu leaders and gave one lakh *balotras* (silver coins) for the reconstruction of the mosque and minaret (Elliot and Dowson Vol. II: 162ff; *Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XXXIV: 146).

TEMPLE AT DWARKA DESTROYED

In 1472 CE, Mahmud Begada attacked Dwarka, a city so intimately connected with Krishna, and one of the *chardhams*. Mahmud Begada was aware that Dwarka and Bet were "a place of worship of brahmins," that housed "the most famous temple of the Hindus" (*mashhurtarin ma'bad-i kufr*) (Sheikh 2017: 114).

The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi Supplement,* a historical gazetteer compiled in 1765, recorded that at the time of Mahmud Begada's attack, the temple at Bet Dwarka housed images of Krishna, his father, and brother, which had been moved from Jagat to Bet early in Muslim rule. The temples on the island of Bet were also destroyed. It stated,

> In the year 878 A.H. Sultan Mahmud Begada conquered Dwarkan, and destroyed the temple in the island of Shankhoddar (Beyt) and built a mosque... In the time of the early Muslim rule the idols dedicated to Krishna, his father, and his mother, were removed from Jagat and placed in the island (Shankhoddar, Beyt), but in the end they were destroyed by Sultan Mahmud Begada (*Mirat-i-Ahmadi: Supplement* 1928: 121-122).

KRISHNA IMAGE HIDDEN IN STEP-WELL

The image of Krishna was said to have been hidden in a step-well and thereby saved from desecration. Abul Fazl recorded the revenues from Dwarka, after which the Mughals showed little interest in the region till 1705. That year, Aurangzeb, on learning of an attack on the Mughal outpost at Dwarka, ordered local officials "to stop the Hindus from worshipping at this place" (*Mirat-i-Ahmadi: Supplement* 1928: 121).

The Jagat temple (also known as the Dwarkadheesh temple) was rebuilt in 1861. Subsequently, in 1958 the Gaikwad of Baroda added a golden pinnacle to the *shikhara*.

THE SACRED SHATRUNJAY HILL

Shatrunjay hill, a mile south of Palitana (Kathiawar), was a revered site of the Svetambara Jains. According to Jinaprabhasuri, every Jina except the 22nd, had preached on the hill. It was hallowed by 23 Preaching Assemblies (*samavasarana*). No Jina attained enlightenment or liberation at Shatrunjay, but millions of Jain monks did. Foremost among them was Pundarika, leader of Tirthankara Adinatha's congregation of monks, who attained release on Shatrunjay with other monks.

Tirthankara Adinatha's son, Bharat built a grand temple on Shatrunjay, with an image of his father made of moonstone, to commemorate his enlightenment (which occurred in Ayodhya). The image of Adinatha remained one of the most revered. As 22 other Jinas would come to Shatrunjay to preach, Bharata also built twenty-two small temples for them. Bharata's half-brother Bahubali built a shrine for Adinatha's mother (the grandmother of Bharata and Bahubali), Marudevi, who, according to Shwetambar tradition, was the first person to attain liberation.

The Pandava brothers and Draupadi were believed to have come to Shatrunjay, consecrated an image of Adinatha, and attained liberation along with many monks. Jinaprabhasuri stated that throughout history people built temples and consecrated images on the mountain; prominent among them being Samprati, Vikramaditya, Satavahana, Vagbhata, Padalipta, Ama, and Datta (Cort 2010: 143-144).

James Tod (1782-1835), who visited Shatrunjay, wrote of the main temple of Adinatha,

> ... On the left hand on entering the area, is a spot peculiarly sacred to all of this faith, where Adna'th used to sit in adoration of the 'One God,' when the mountain-top, with no canopy but the sky, was his sole place of worship. A Raen tree still marks the site, and is firmly believed by the faithful to be a never-dying scion of that which shaded the first of their prophets, and which now overshadows his sanctified *padwa*. He could not have selected a spot more calculated to assist the mind's devotion, and elevate it, 'through Nature, up to Nature's God.' The prospect was sublime... (Tod 1839: 286-287).

A.K. Forbes (1821-1865), who came to India in 1843 and spent most of his time in western India, described the site and its desecration,

> The holy mountain of Shutroonjye, sacred to Adeenath, the first of the twenty-four hierophants of the Jains... Shutroonjye is one of the most ancient and sacred shrines of the Jain religion. It is described as the first of places of pilgrimages ... The temples on Shutroonjye were afterwards destroyed by barbarians and for a long time desolation reigned in the holy mountain (Forbes 1878: 4-7).

TEMPLES DESECRATED

Medieval Jain texts recorded that Jain temples were desecrated by the Khaljis, Tughluqs, and Muzaffarids. The *Samra-rasu* (ca. 1315); the *Vividtirthakalpa* (1333); and the *Nabhinandan-jinoddharprabandha* (1336-37), all stated that Khalji troops attacked Shatrunjay in 1312/13 CE. In 1414, Ahmad Shah deputed Taj-ul-Mulk to destroy all temples in Gujarat. In 1469, Girnar (the sacred site of Digambar Jains) was ravaged, and many Hindu temples also destroyed (Cousens 1931: 75).

IDGAHS CONSTRUCTED TO PROTECT TEMPLES

Henry Cousens observed miniature masonry idgahs in front of the tower of the Adinatha temple, as well as above the south corridor, and the adjoining temple. According to him, Jains claimed to have built the idgahs themselves to protect the temple from Muhammadans! They had learnt that it was contrary to Islam to destroy an idgah or mosque once built. If the Adinatha temple was destroyed, it would fall on the idgah. Cousens observed,

> From this it would seem that sad experience prompted the Jains to have recourse to this artifice to prevent a repetition of what had already happened.

He noticed that the nose of the Adinatha image had been broken, and was "replaced by a gold one." The Muhammadans were known to cut off the noses of images. He saw many "undoubtedly old images in the cells of the corridors with particularly flat noses." On examination he noted that the noses had been refashioned into the face,

> ...to get sufficient protuberance for the new ones; they might be termed countersunk noses. The lips too, which are, as a rule, prominent, are in these, flattened and mis-shapened. The old *simhasanas* (old marble image-seats), also, have been woefully mutilated; and, from the fact that none of them is in its original position, it would appear that whole shrines were pulled down (Cousens 1931: 76).

When Muslim persecution lessened, temple building recommenced on the holy mount and continues apace to the present.

THE TEMPLE OF SHANTIDAS

Shantidas Jawahari, a leading jeweller and financier of his time, and his elder brother Vardhaman, built a magnificent Jain temple at Bibipur (present Saraspur), a suburb of Ahmednagar. An English trader from Ahmadabad, in a letter dated 28th December 1627, referred to him as "Santidas, the deceased King's [i.e. Jahangir's] jeweller."

Work on the grand temple appeared to have commenced in 1621-22, and was completed within four years; when the image of Tirthankara Chintamani Parshwanath was installed. An unpublished Sanskrit poem, *Chintamani-prashasti*, stated that "this song of praise of the temple of Chintamani-Parshwanath was written in 1697 S. on the second day, Friday, of the bright half of Pausha, by Vidyasaubhagya, the pupil of the learned Satyasaubhagya (December 4, 1640 CE)." The *prasasti* was thus composed around fifteen years after the formal consecration of the temple. It described the temple,

> In S. 1678 (AD 1621), Vardhaman and Shantidas, who had reached the zenith of their fortune, who had taken the religious vow along with the members of their family, who had been leading a very pure life, and who had heard that building temples led to good luck, built a magnificent temple in the suburb of Bibipur (verses 45-49). On the arches of the temple there were statues of females resembling celestial nymphs, while at the door of the temple there was the Panchapatra for protection. The lofty steps of the temple indicated the way for the heavenward march of the devotees. There were six halls in the temple called Meghanada, Sinhanada, Suryanada, Rangarama, Khela and Gudhagotra. It had two turrets, four square temples around, and four underground shrines with idols of the Jina (verses 50-54) (Commissariat 1987: 53-54, 62).

Albrecht von Mandelslo, a German traveller who visited Ahmadabad in 1638, saw the temple thirteen years after its construction (Mandelslo 1995: 23-25; 101). He left a vivid description,

> We returned into the city to see the principal mosque (temple) of the Benjans (Banyas which without dispute is one of the noblest structures that can be seen. It was then new for the Founder, who was a rich Benjan merchant named Santidas, was living in my time. The mosque stands in the middle of a great court which is enclosed with a high wall of freestone, all about which there is a gallery much after the manner of our cloisters in monasteries, having also its seats or cells and in every cell a marble statue, white or black, representing a woman naked (Mandelslo and also Thevenot mistook the marble statues of the Jain Tirthankaras in the cells for naked women sitting cross-legged) sitting and having legs lying cross under her according to the mode of the country. There were some had three statues to wit, a great one between two little ones.
>
> At the entrance into the mosque there are two elephants of black marble done to the life, and upon one of them the effigy of the founder. The whole mosque is vaulted and the walls adorned with several figures of men and other living creatures. There was not anything within the mosque, save that at the further end of the structure there were three chapels or obscure places, divided one from the other by wooden rails, wherein might be seen statues of marble, like those we had seen in the cells, with this difference only that there was a lighted lamp before that which stood in the middle.
>
> We saw there also one of their Priests who was then busy in receiving, from the hands of such as came thither to do their devotions, flowers wherewith he adorned his images; as also oil for the lamps which hung before the rails, and wheat and salt for the sacrifice, while he set the flowers about the statues. His mouth and nose were covered with a linen cloth, lest the impurity of his breath should profane the mystery and coming ever and anon near the lamp he muttered over

> certain prayers and rubbed his hands up and down in the flames thereof as if he had washed them in the smoke, and sometimes stroked his face with them ... (Commissariat 1987: 62-63).

The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* briefly noted that when Aurangzeb arrived as Subadar in Ahmadabad in 1645,

> ...vestiges of the Temple of Chintaman situated on the side of Saraspur built by Satidas jeweller, were removed under the Prince's order and a Masjid was erected on its remains. It was named *Quwwat-ul-Islam* (*Mirat-i-Ahmadi* 1965: 194).

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, who visited Ahmadabad numerous times, wrote a short account of the incident,

> There was a Pagoda in this place, which the Muhammadans took possession of in order to turn it into a mosque. Before entering it you traverse three great courts paved with marble, and surrounded by galleries, and you are not allowed to place foot in the third without removing your shoes. The exterior of the mosque is ornamented with mosaic, the greater part of which consists of agates of different colours, obtained from the mountains of Cambay, only two days' journey from thence (Tavernier Vol. I 1889: 72).

Another French traveller, Jean de Thevenot, who visited Ahmadabad in 1666, wrote a detailed report on the event,

> *Amedabad* being inhabited also by a great number of Heathens, there are *Pagods*, or Idol-Temples it. That which was called the *Pagod* of *Santidas* [temple of Chintaman built by Shantidas, a Jain merchant, in 1638 at a cost of nine lakh rupees] was the chief, before *Auranzeb* converted it into a Mosque. When he performed that Ceremonie, he caused a Cow to be killed in the place, knowing very well, that after such an Action, the Gentiles according to their Law, could worship no more therein. All round the Temple there is a Cloyster furnished with lovely Cells, beautified with Figures of Marble in relief, representing naked Women sitting after the Oriental fashion. The inside Roof of the Mosque is pretty

> enough, and the Walls are full of the Figures of Men and Beasts; but *Auranzeb*, who hath always made a shew of an affected Devotion, which at length raised him to the Throne, caused the Noses of all these Figures which added a great deal of Magnificence to that *Mosque*, to be beat off [broken] (Thevenot 1949: 13-14).

Being a man of considerable repute, Shantidas was unwilling to accept the wrongdoing to his religion, and personally presented the case to Shah Jahan.[7] Though the Emperor had himself ordered that all newly built temples in Banaras be pulled down,[8] Shantidas's position compelled him to intercede. He consulted Mulla Abdul Hakim, who stated that since the structure was the property of another person, it could not be regarded a mosque according to the *Shariat* (Tirmizi 1995: 11). The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* recorded that the Emperor recalled Aurangzeb, and in his place appointed Dara the Governor of Gujarat. Shah Jahan issued a *farman* (dated 3rd July 1648) to Ghairat Khan and other officials of the *suba*,

> Be it known to the governors, subadars and mutsaddis [officials], present and future, of the province of Gujarat, especially the one who has been worthy of various favours [here follow various honorific prefixes], viz. Ghairat Khan, who has been reliant on and gladdened by royal favours, that formerly, in respect of the temple of the leading person of the time (zubdat-al-akran), Satidas Jawahari, an exalted and blessed order had been issued to Umdat-ul-Mulk [pillar of the state] Shayista Khan to this effect: Shahzada [prince] Sultan Aurangzeb Bahadur had constructed in that place some mihrabs [prayer arches] and had given it the name of a mosque; and after that Mulla Abdal Hakim had represented to His Majesty that this building, by reason of its being the property of another person, could not be considered a mosque according to the inviolable Islamic law; a world-obeyed order, therefore obtained the honour of being issued that this building is the property of Satidas, and that because of the mihrab which the famous Prince

> had made in that place the above mentioned person should not be harassed and that the arch should be removed and the aforesaid building should be handed over to him.
>
> Now at this time, the world-obeyed and illustrious order has been issued that the mihrab which the victorious and illustrious Prince has consecrated may be retained and a wall be built near the same as a screen between the temple and the mihrab. Hence it is ordained that, since his exalted Majesty has, as an act of favour, granted the aforesaid temple to Santidas, he should be in possession of it as before and he may worship there according to his creed in any way he likes, and no one should obstruct or trouble him; also that some of the Faqirs (beggars) who have made their abode in that place should be turned out, and Santidas should be relieved form the troubles and quarrels on this account.
>
> And since it has been represented to His Majesty that some of the Bohras [a community of merchants who had been converted to Islam] have removed and carried away the materials of that temple, in the event of this being so, those materials should be got back from them and should be restored to the person referred to above [Santidas], and if the aforesaid materials have been used up, their price should be paid to Santidas.
>
> In this matter this order should be considered extremely urgent and there should be no deviation from or disobedience to it. Written on the twenty-first of the month of Jumad-as-Sani in the year 1058 H. [3rd July 1648] (Commissariat 1940: 40-41).

By the *farman*, Shah Jahan ordered Mughal officials that the structures added by Aurangzeb be retained; a wall be built to separate them from the rest of the original temple, and that section be restored to Shantidas. But the Jains never used the temple again; for them it had been defiled forever, as a cow had been slaughtered in its boundaries. Muslims too would hardly have used the building as a mosque after Shah

Jahan's orders. The structure gradually fell into decay. M.S. Commissariat wrote in 1932, that even its remains were almost untraceable (Commissariat 1987: 59).

From a subsequent reference in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, it appeared that when Aurangzeb converted the temple into a mosque, two marble images, each weighing a hundred *man*, were buried underground by Shantidas, who had openly declared that they would be destroyed. A hundred years later, in 1743, when Muhammad Shah was the Emperor and Fakhruddin the Subadar of Gujarat, bribes were paid to Mughal officials and both images publicly installed in the Jhaverivada at Ahmadabad (Commissariat 1957: 142-143; Ray 2015: 82).

The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* commented that the open worship of the Jain *murtis*, "... mark(ed) the weakness of Islam and the decline of religious zeal." Shantidas's descendants obtained permission to bring those images on carts into the city, and installed them in an underground temple. The temple had long existed, and Jains used to worship there "secretly for fear of the Musalmans" (Commissariat 1987: 60).

SOMNATH – 'THE SHRINE ETERNAL'

Prabhasa, near the famous Somnath temple, was an important pilgrimage centre. It was there that Soma, the moon, was cured of a wasting disease brought about by the curse of his father-in-law, Daksha. The confluence of three rivers, Sarasvati, Kapila, and Hiranya also bestowed special merit on the place. In Prabhasa, Shiva as the presiding deity was worshipped as Somnath.

The shrine of Somnath, which became a symbol of the iconoclastic zeal of Islam, occupied a vital place on the sacred map of India. Legend placed the initial construction of the temple to the latter half of the first century CE by Soma Sarman, though no structural evidence of it was found (Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 25).[9]

A second temple was possibly constructed in the seventh century CE, in the reign of the Dharasena IV (r. 640-649), the Maitraka ruler of Valabhi. The Ghumali copper plate of 831 CE, mentioned the grantee, Madhava, as a resident of Someshvara; which confirmed the existence of the temple prior to 831 CE. That could, in fact, have been the first temple of Somnath (Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 6-7, 25-26). However, according to K.M. Munshi, the *garbhagriha* of the second temple was positioned at the site of the first temple (Munshi 1965: 18). The second temple was believed to have been destroyed by the Arabs but that has not been substantiated.

Towards the close of the tenth century, a (third) temple was reconstructed or renovated, probably by the Solanki ruler, Mularaja in Maha Gurjara style (Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 26). K.M. Munshi placed the third temple not much later than 800 CE. For in 815, Nagabhatta II, the foremost ruler of north India, visited Prabhas to worship Someshvara (Munshi 1965: 21). As Nagabhatta II visited *tirthas* in Saurashtra including Someshvara, that may or may not have been a reference to the Shiva temple, as the town was also known by the same name.

THIRD TEMPLE DESTROYED BY MAHMUD GHAZNAVI

In January 1026, in the reign of Mularaja's grandson Bhimadeva, Mahmud Ghaznavi entered the Somnath temple, sanctified by centuries of devotion.[10] Farrukh Sistani, who claimed to have accompanied Mahmud, reported the event. Gardizi also penned an account roughly twenty-three years later (Minorsky1948: 625-640). Alberuni vividly described the incident,

> ... The image was destroyed by the Prince Mahmud — may God be merciful to him! — A.H. 416. He ordered the upper part to be broken and the remainder to be transported to his residence, Ghaznin, with all its coverings and trappings of gold, jewels, and embroidered garments. Part of it has been

> thrown into the hippodrome of the town, together with the *Cakrasvamin*, an idol of bronze that had been brought from Taneshar. Another part of the idol from Somanath lies before the door of the mosque of Ghaznin, on which people rub their feet to clean them from dirt and wet... (Alberuni Vol. II 1910: 102-106).

K.M. Munshi, who visited the site of the desecrated temple in the twentieth century, wrote, "The Third Temple of beautiful thin-grained red sandstone was thus destroyed. I saw the steps of the temple, the base of the pillars burnt and the debris of its south wall sloping seaward imbedded in the earth" (Munshi 1965: 37).

Soon after Mahmud's departure, sometime between 1026 and 1030, Bhimadeva, aided by king Bhoja and Trailocanapala of Lata, built the fourth temple of Somnath, in the Maru-Gurjara style. Subsequently, his grandson, Jayasimha Siddharaja undertook a pilgrimage to Somnath with his mother; he added a *mahapitha* to the stairway (Cousens 1998a: 22-23; Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 27). He also invited the celebrated Shaivite, Bhava Brihaspati to take charge of the temple (Munshi 1965: 41-42).

Kumarapala, who succeeded Jayasimha Siddharaja, was a wise king, considerably influenced by Hemachandra (1089-1172), his minister and Jain polymath. He visited Somnath accompanied by Hemachandra. The *Somnathpattam Prasasti* of Bhava Brihaspati, dated 1169 CE stated that he requested Kumarapala to rebuild the temple as it was in a state of disrepair. In gratitude for the pious suggestion, the ruler conferred on Brihaspati the title of principal priest, thereby making him the leading Shaiva authority in the area.

Bhava Brihaspati built the Kailasa-*meru prasada* (Temple 5), in 1169. An inscription in the Bhadrakali temple of Bhava Brihaspati that originally belonged to the Somnath temple stated it looked "august like up to mount Kailasa." The temple was almost as big, if not bigger, than the Rudramahalaya temple at Siddhpur. The aged king attended the opening ceremony, and gave Bhava Brihaspati generous gifts (Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 27; Cousens 1998a: 23-24).

After Kumarapala, Bhimadeva II added the *Meghanada mandapa* to the temple in 1217. In 1287, Ganda Tripurantaka, the pontiff of the temple, constructed five minor Siva shrines, north of the *mandapa* (Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 28; Cousens 1931: 25).

MASJID BUILT AT SOMNATH-PATAN WITH LOCAL ASSISTANCE

Some two hundred years after Mahmud Ghaznavi's attack, in 1264 CE, Sri Chanda, the local raja, helped Nuruddin Firuz, a merchant from Hormuz, purchase land to build a masjid in the town of Somnath. The Veraval inscription recorded the deed in Sanskrit and Arabic, the latter text intended for the Arab community alone. The inscription also noted grants made by Nuruddin in favour of the mosque; and his direction that the surplus income be sent to places of worship at Makha (Mecca) and Madina (Medina). D.C. Sircar, who edited the inscription, observed, "It is interesting that Nuruddin Firuz did not think of spending the surplus amount in some good cause in the land where the mosque was built but arranged for its dispatch to distant Mecca and Medina" (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XXXIV: 141-146).

ALAUDDIN KHALJI'S ATTACK ON SOMNATH

Kumarapala's temple was defiled by the forces of Alauddin Khalji in 1298 CE.[11] There were conflicting accounts of the fate of the *linga* (Bird 1835: 157). According to Amir Khusrau, Ulugh Khan,

> destroyed all the idols and temples of Somnat, but sent one idol, the biggest of all idols, to the court of his Godlike Majesty, and in that ancient stronghold of idolatry the summons to prayers was pronounced so loud, that they

> heard it in Misr and Madain (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 74).

Barni endorsed the statement that the image was taken to the imperial capital,

> ... and the idol which after the victory of Sultan Mahmud and his destruction of (the idol) Manat, the Brahmans had set up under the name Somnath for the worship of the Hindus, was removed and carried to Dehli, where it was laid down for people to tread upon (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 163).

KANHADADE PRABANDHA'S VERSION OF THE ATTACK

Padmanabha, in his *Kanhadade Prabandha*, presented a noticeably different account of the attack on Somnath. He composed his work in 1455 CE, at the behest of the fifth in descent of Raval Kanhadade Chauhan of Jalor, who had fought the Khalji forces. The work recounted the heroic tale of Kanhadade and the people of Jalor, who resisted the Delhi armies till the very end (Padmanabha 1991: vii-xxii). The text stated,

> Profound calamity had fallen upon Lord Somanatha's temple. The locks (of the doors) were broken open and the enemy rushed through the doors tumultuously, and took possession of the temple drum and Kansala. The Mlechchha (*asura*) stone-breakers climbed up the sikhara of the temple (to take off the golden *kalasa*) and began to rain blows on the stone idols on all the three sides (*pasa*) by their hammers, the stone pieces falling all around. They loosened every joint of the temple building, and then began to break the different layers (*thara*), and the sculptured elephants and horses on them by incessant blows of their hammers. Then, amidst loud and vulgar clamour, they began to apply force from both the sides to uproot the massive idol by means of wooden beams and iron crowbars.
>
> Such strange and improper happenings were taking place: the *kaliyuga* was, no doubt, showing its true temper: Lord Siva, leaving the earthly abode, went away to Kailasa.

Ulugh Khan now ordered:

> 'The temple will remain without its God idol! Despatch the idol (*bhuta*) to Delhi where I will have it crushed and made into lime.'
>
> Half cart (*Faraka* i.e. *Firq*) and *rekhala*, with wheels fitted with iron rims, were brought to place the idol with the help of strong wooden beams. Dark coarse Bhoias loaded the *linga* on the huge cart to which were yoked three pairs of bullocks, and the idol was sent off towards Delhi (Padmanabha 1991: 10).

Kanhadade confronted the returning army and a bitter battle was fought,

> The next day, the Rauts surveyed the battlefield. The *palhans* of the horses, turrets (*panjari*) carried by the elephants, and slaughtered horses were lying scattered all over the ground... Also could be seen severed heads and torsos lying here and there. The ground had become wet and miry with flesh and gore of the slain.
>
> The Raval secured back Lord Somanatha's idol and then washed his weapons... No sooner the people of Jalor came to know of Kanhadade's victory, they came to greet him and offer felicitations... (Padmanabha 1991: 25-27).
>
> At Jalor, Kanhadade now worshipped Lord Somanatha, daily bathing the idol with *panchamrita*, performing all the sixteen rituals, and adorning the idol with sandal paste, flowers, *tilaka*, etc....
>
> Of the Ekalinga, which saves one from falling into the hell and dire troubles and afflictions, five idols were carved out; there is no sixth one like them. One of these was ceremoniously installed at Soratha and another at Lohasing in Vagada. One was sent to a pleasant spot on the Abu hill for consecration, while one was installed at Jalor where the Rai built a temple and one was sent to Saivadi (Jalor district). At all these five places, worship of Lord Siva is performed (Padmanabha 1991: 28-29).[12]

TEMPLE REPAIRED AND WORSHIP RESUMED

Sometime between 1325 and 1351 CE, the Somnath temple was repaired and the *linga* re-established by the Cudasama king of Junagadh, Mahipaladeva (1308-1325), as stated in an inscription in Girnar (Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 28; Munshi 1965: 53-54; Cousens 1998a: 25-26).

In 1394, Muzaffar Khan led an expedition to Somnath. Apparently, he did not destroy the temple; though he built a mosque at Somnath (Pl. 43) (Cousens 1998a: 26). He tried to convert the people to Islam. A popular revolt ensued, and the shrine was again made fit for worship (Munshi 1965: 54).

TEMPLE CONVERTED INTO A MOSQUE

Sultan Ahmed Shah desecrated the temple in 1413 (Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 28). In 1469, his grandson, Sultan Mahmud Begada attacked Junagadh and Somnath (Pl. 44). He removed the *linga* and converted the shrine into a mosque. K.M. Munshi was of the view that "the edifice was not used as a mosque for any length of time" (Munshi 1965: 55).

Munshi's surmise was supported by the colophons of two literary works, the *Krsna-krida-kavya* of poet Kesavadasa Hrdayarama of Prabhasa (1473 CE), and the *Prabodhaprakasa* of Visnudasa-Bhima (1490 CE). The former alluded to the city of Prabhasa and the Somnath temple. The second work mentioned the "*nija-avasa* (*nija*-mandira) of Somanatha, seeming as though a second Mt. Kailasa on the surface of the earth." These references indicated that worship in the temple had resumed. For the next 150-200 years, there was no disruption (Munshi 1965: 56-57).

AURANGZEB CONVERTS TEMPLE INTO MASJID

In 1669, the shrine was defiled again and, in 1701, converted into a mosque on the orders of Aurangzeb (Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 29).[13]

TEMPLE BUILT AGAIN AND AGAIN

In 1783, Maharani Ahilya Bai Holkar constructed a new temple near the site of the old Somnath temple. It had a two storied *garbha griha* with the *linga* placed below ground level as a measure of abundant caution. The fear of iconoclasm remained firm as late as 1783!

After independence, K.M. Munshi and Sardar Patel spearheaded the initiative to construct a new temple at the site of the old shrine. President Rajendra Prasad presided over the installation ceremony of the *jyotirlinga*.

NOTES

1. Portuguese traveller, Duarte Barbosa gave a brief description of the city of Ahmadnagar in the early sixteenth century. The first detailed account was provided by Englishman, William Finch who visited in the early seventeenth century. His contemporary, Nicholas Worthington also wrote his impressions of the city (Ray 2015: 78-79).
2. The Khalji's attacked Gujarat twice, first in 1300 and again in 1303. A bilingual Persian-Sanskrit inscription of 704 AH/ 1304 CE showed that Gujarat returned to Vaghela rule after Alauddin Khalji's first invasion. That necessitated a second campaign.
3. In Ahmadabad, the Ahmad Shah mosque (1411), the mosque of Haibat Khan (1415), and the congregational mosque (1424), all made extensive use of temple components (Michell and Shah 1988: 32-39, 42-43).
4. Modhera or Modherapura was regarded the original habitat of the Modha Brahmans, bequeathed to them "as a *krishnarpana* on the occasion of the marriage of Rama and Sita." Modha Brahmans were gurus of Modha Vaniyas; the Jain *acharya* Hemachandra was of Modha parentage (Burgess and Cousens 1903: 71).
5. Kirit Mankodi, who made an exhaustive study of the temple, stated that the presence of the twelve Adityas on the shrine's outer walls and elsewhere had led to the assumption that the temple was dedicated to Surya, the Sun God. According to

him, the shrine was dedicated to both Surya and Shiva. He noted that the twelve forms of Shiva's consort (the twelve Gauris) were given as much importance as the twelve Adityas. According to him, the temple synthesized the Sun god with Shiva, a synthesis "already well known in Hinduism, both Puranic and Tantric" (Mankodi 2009: 176-195; Mankodi 2015: 13-14).

6. The first Chaulukya ruler, Mularaja I patronised Jain shrines, as did his successors. Inscriptions from the reigns of Karnadeva I (r. 1065-94), Jayasimha Siddharaja, Kumarapala, and Arjunadeva (r. 1261-75) confirmed Chaulukya patronage of Jain establishments. Jains were equally solicitous. In 1172, the Ghurids desecrated the Somesvara temple at Kiradu, Barmer district, Rajasthan. Four years later, the wife of Tejahpala, a Jain minister of one of the feudatories of Bhimadeva II, gifted a new Shiva image to the temple.
7. Shantidas had easy access to the Mughal Court. In 1628, Shah Jahan gifted him several horses and elephants, and also approved the lease (*ijara*) of Shankheshwar village in pargana Munjpur, north Gujarat to Shantidas and his descendants. Additionally, he was granted Palitana village and Shatrunjay hill, as the representative of the powerful Svetambara Jain community of western India (Commissariat 1940: 17, 46-47; Commissariat 1957: 144-146; Commissariat 1987: 54, 60-61, 63-66). By a *farman* of 12th March 1660, Aurangzeb (probably in the last year of Shantidas's life) confirmed the grant of the village, hill, and temple of Palitana, and gave a further grant of the hill and temples of Girnar and Abu as a special favour. These were given to Shantidas in trust for the use and worship of the Jain community (Commissariat 1940: 17-19, 54-55; Commissariat 1957: 148; Commissariat 1987: 67-68).
8. Shah Jahan's order to demolish temples in Banaras stated, "It has been previously represented that there were some of the finest Hindu temples at Banaras. In former reigns, the foundations of many new ones had been laid, some of which had been completed, while others still remained in an imperfect state; and these the opulent among the pagans were desirous of seeing finished. The infidel-consuming monarch, who is the guardian of true religion, had therefore commanded

that at Banaras and throughout the entire imperial dominions, wheresoever idol-temples had been recently built, they should be razed to the ground. Accordingly, in these days it was reported from the province of Allahabad that 70 had been demolished at Banaras alone" (*The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan* 1990: 89-90).

9. There was a temple dedicated to Chandraprabha, the eighth Tirthankara, at Somnath-Patan. Jinaprabhasuri stated that the image of Chandraprabha was brought to Devapattan (Somnath-Patan) by air from Valabhi, along with images of Amba and Ksetrapala. He described the Chandraprabha image as made of Chandrakanta stone; that was installed at Prabhas, along with an image of Jvalinidevi. The image came from Valabhi, where it was believed to have been consecrated by Sri Gautama-Svami and was the gift of Nandivardhana (the elder brother of Mahavira). According to Jinaprabhasuri, an image of Chandraprabha installed in the Jina's lifetime, existed in a shrine in Nasikkapura (Nasik). An image of the Jina was well-known at Varanasi, while another was worshipped in Chandravati (Shah 1987: 142).
10. Dhanapala, once at the court of Paramara Bhoja, was the only contemporary authority to write on Mahmud Ghaznavi's invasion of Gujarat. He listed the cities destroyed by the invader, among them Srimala (Bhinnamala), Anhilavadau (Anhilvada-Patana), Caddavalli (Candravati), Soratthu (Sorath), Devalavadau (Delvada), and Somessar. He claimed that the invader could not destroy the Mahavira of Saccaur (Satyapura);
    Bhanje vinu Sirimala-desu anu Anhilavadau
    Caddavalli Soratthu bhaggu punu Deulavadu
    Somesaru so te hi bhaggu jana-mana-anandanun
    Bhaggu na Siri-Saccauri-viru Siddhatthah nandanun
    [*Satyapuriya-Sri-Mahavira-Utsaha*] (Dhaky and Shastri 1974: 34).
11. Persian poet, Sadi visited Somnath in the thirteenth century. He described his experience in Tale 140 titled, "*The idol of Somanth*" (Sadi 1974: 214-219).
    "An ivory idol I saw in Somnath,
    Encrusted as Manat in pagan days;

Its form the sculptor so had fashioned
That no form fairer could be fancied;
From every region caravans would make their way
To gain sight of that form without spirit...
To humble themselves before that tongueless one.
The inwardness of this I failed to fathom...
I mildly asked: 'O Brahmin!
At the doings in this locality I am amazed!
These folk are bemused by this impotent image
And fettered fast within the pit of error:
His hand has no power, his foot cannot walk,
And if you cast him down, he'll not rise up again;
See you not his eyes are amber?
It's a mistake to see good-faith from those with stony eyes!'
....
That friend at what I said became my enemy;
In rage, like fire he grew and seized upon me;
...
And down into a pit I cast him....
So with a stone, stone-dead I killed that foul fellow,
For tales no more are heard from one who's dead;
But, seeing I had roused a tumult,
I left that land and fled..." (Sadi 1974: 214-219).

12. Romila Thapar analysed the incident,

    "It could be argued that perhaps the temple had become a symbol of legitimation of the kings of Gujarat after Kumarapala's renovation, therefore the conquest of Gujarat required the capturing of the icon at Somanatha, but seems not to have required the destruction of the temple. Hence, the focus on the icon. The capturing of the icon amounts to the symbolic capturing of the legitimacy to rule, apart from an Islamic victory over Shaivism"

    Further she stated,

    "Kanhadade retrieves the lingam, which is then safeguarded by being converted into five icons...Could this also be an attempt to mirror the act of Mahmud who is said to have taken the pieces of the icon back to Ghazni and sent some to Mecca and Medina, although the desecration of the icon in this case was a form of 'inverted' legitimation" (Thapar 2004: 128-129).

13. A *farman* of Aurangzeb, dated 20th November 1665, contained several discriminatory regulations against Hindus. It stated that on the *pancham*, *amawas*, and *ekadashi*, Hindus closed their shops early. The Emperor directed that the shops be always kept open. Further, on Holi "they open their tongue with foul speech," and light the Holi fire in every *chakla* and *bazaar*. Mughal officers were ordered to make sure that Hindus did not light the bazaars on Diwali, and did not throw sticks into the Holi fire. The *farman* also mentioned that some potters sold clay images of horses and elephants on Id, Shab-i-Barat, and on the days of Urs. Such clay images were prohibited (*Mirat-i-Ahmadi* 1965: 261-264).

    In his 38th regnal year, Aurangzeb ordered the governor, Shujaat Khan to demolish the temple at Vadnagar (probably the great shrine of Hatkeshwar Mahadeva). In 1703-1704, Muhammad Azam, Aurangzeb's eldest son and Governor of Gujarat, noticed that the number of steps to the pulpit (*mimbar*) in the mosques at Ahmadabad, especially in the Jama Masjid and the Idgah, were more than permitted. After consultations with the ulama, he ordered that the *mimbar* at both places be removed and new ones built with just three steps, as had been the practice in the time of the Prophet (Commissariat 1987: 131-135).

10

Maharashtra

The iconoclastic threat loomed large over Maharashtra for a significant period in the medieval era. Various stratagems were adopted to safeguard temples and deities.[1]

NAGANATHA TEMPLE – UNDERGROUND CHAMBER DUG

An interesting ruse was apparent in the case of the Naganatha temple (Aundha, Parbhani district), the largest in Marathwada. The temple structure belonged to two different periods. The older portion, from the ground level to the eaves, dated to the thirteenth century. It could be approached by steps on the south side of the upper floor. Due to the danger of iconoclasts, an underground chamber was dug just under the sanctum and the *syambhu linga* (one of the twelve *jyotirlingas*) relocated there. The underground cella was so small that only one person could enter at a time, and its ceiling so low that it was difficult to stand erect (Pl. 45). The *linga* was not visible from the hall doorway and priests could discretely continue *puja* (Cousens

1931: 77-78; Deglurkar 1974: 41-45). The image of Vishnu on the upper floor was instated later. The Nandi *mandapa* in front of the temple was a recent addition.[2]

DEVAGIRI – ATTACKED TWICE BY DELHI SULTANS

Devagiri, situated on one of the northern routes to central Deccan, was a *tirtha* of long standing. A number of Jain and Shiva rock-cut cave temples, hewn out of an adjoining hill, perhaps gave it the name "mountain of gods."

In the year 1196 CE, the Yadavas made the temple city their capital. The construction of Devagiri fort, among the strongest in the Deccan, was credited to the first Yadava king, Bhillama V (though it did not seem the handiwork of one ruler). It was a complex comprising a hill fort, two land-forts at its base, and a large township beyond that was also protected by a town wall. The smaller of the two land forts was known as Kala Kot, the one outside was Mahakot, and the township, Ambarkot. The area of the inner fort, i.e. the Mahakot, contained a considerable number of Hindu and Jain temples, and a large stepwell locally known as "Saraswati Well" or Saraswati Bavadi. They added to Devagiri's renown as a religious centre (Mate and Pathy 1992: 19-21).

It was estimated that the total area occupied by temples and ancillary structures would have been around seven acres. The area of the township (Mahakot) was roughly fifty acres, which meant that one-seventh of the town was occupied by sacred structures. The sheer density of temples established that it was an important Jain and Hindu pilgrimage centre, well before it became the capital of the Yadavas (Mate and Pathy 1992: 11).

Congregation Mosque Built of Temple Parts

Devagiri was attacked twice by the forces of the Delhi Sultans, first in the reign of Alauddin Khalji, and second, in the time of his successor, Mubarak Khalji. As a result of the two invasions, its physical landscape underwent a radical change. Sometime between 1313 and 1318, a grand congregational mosque, Deccan's earliest surviving Islamic monument, was constructed at the centre of the city. It ranked next only to Delhi's Qutab mosque in size.

M.S. Mate and T. V. Pathy, who studied the mosque, showed that it was built from parts of Hindu and Jain temples. One hundred and seventy-seven columns carved in the Yadava style were used in the construction of the mosque, of which one hundred and six were placed in the central prayer hall. They calculated that between twelve and fourteen temple materials would have been used to provide the requisite number of columns for the mosque. A large number of temple parts and sculptures were scattered all over the Mahakot area; the most substantial structural remains were embedded in the mosque. In the *liwan* or western hall, there was a profusion of temple pillars, placed indiscriminately on top of one another. Though some of the pillars and brackets were mutilated and defaced, they retained their original shape, which was typical of Yadava temple architecture. The loose images included those of Parsvanatha, Vishnu, and Shiva; as the Jain, Vishnu, and Shiva temples had existed alongside (Mate and Pathy 1992: 23-25).

Richard Eaton and Philip Wagoner argued that in constructing the mosque, the Khaljis "simultaneously liquidated and absorbed most if not all the religious monuments that had theretofore defined the city." According to them, the Khaljis adhered to a conventional Indian practice, "For centuries, states in the Deccan – as in India generally – had desecrated royal temples of defeated enemies by way of delegitimizing the latter's authority" (Eaton and Wagoner 2014: 44).

Hindus did not seem overly impressed by that analysis. At some stage in recent history, the Jami Mosque was converted into Bharat Mata Mandir, by the placement of an image of Bharat Mata in its precincts (Pl. 46).

Four deities widely worshipped in Maharashtra were Mahalakshmi of Kolhapur, Bhavani of Tuljapur, Khandoba of Jejuri, and Vitthal of Pandharpur.

Karvir, modern Kolhapur, the abode of goddess Mahalakshmi, was known in ancient times as Dakshin-Kashi, Kashi of the south. Kolhapur and Tuljapur were historically and culturally the most prominent *shakti-pithas* of Maharashtra. The *Padma Purana* had a separate section, *Karavira Mahatmya* devoted to Karvir *kshetra*. The *Devi Mahatmya* from the *Markandeya Purana* contained several mythical references to the *kshetra* (Mate 1988: 26-27, 41).

As per available records, a city called Kollapura, probably after goddess Kolla, grew up on the banks of the Panchganga River. Kolla was the deity of aboriginal tribes, like the Kols or Kolis. Early on, the site was known as a seat of the mother goddess (*matrikasthana*). It grew in status when another goddess, Mahalakshmi was installed in the city, and a temple built in the Rashtrakuta period (c. 800 CE) (Sankalia and Dixit 1952: 7-8).

Acharya Harisena, in his *Brhat-Kathakosa* composed in 931-32 CE in Saurashtra, referred to *Kolladigiri pattana* in Dakshinapatha. That *pattana* (town) seemed to be Kollapura. As it was mentioned in a folk story of the tenth century, the town would have been known by that name several centuries earlier. Hemachandra, the famous Jain writer of Gujarat, in his *Dvyasrayakavya*, mentioned gifts sent by the lord of Kolhapur, who was blessed by goddess Lakshmi, for prince Camunda, son of Mularaja. That placed the antiquity of Kolhapur as a seat (*pitha*) of the goddess at least a century before Hemachandra (1088-1173 CE) (Sankalia and Dixit 1952: 2-3).

The earliest known inscriptional reference to Mahalakshmi was in a copper plate grant of Amoghavarsha of the Rashtrakuta dynasty, dated 817 CE. Amoghavarsha was a follower of Jainism and also an ardent devotee of Mahalakshmi. The copper plate, found at Sanjan, stated that Amoghavarsha wanted to liberate his subjects from a certain disaster, so he propitiated Mahalakshmi by cutting off one of his fingers as an offering to her (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XVIII: 248; Altekar 1934: 273). Although the relevant verses did not mention Kolhapur by name, scholars were agreed that the Mahalakshmi mentioned in the plate was none other than that of Kolhapur (Mate 1988: 46-47).

A copper plate grant of Shashtharaj I of the Kadamba dynasty, dated Saka 960 (1038), stated that he went to Kolhapur and worshipped Mahalakshmi in the year Saka 920. In two Kannada inscriptions from Shirur (Bijapur district), dated Saka 971 (1049) and 985 (1064 CE), Rajavarma and Marasingha were respectively mentioned as devotees of Mahalakshmi, who was the wife of Shiva and whose vehicle was *simha* (Sankalia and Dixit 1952: 4; Khare 1955: 97-99).

Three leading dynasties of early medieval Maharashtra – the Rashtrakutas, Kadambas, and Silaharas – regarded Karvirvasini Mahalakshmi as their family goddess. Around Saka 980 (1058), the Silaharas of Kolhapur described themselves as having received boons from Mahalakshmi. Kolhapur was linked with the Silahara dynasty for nearly sixty-five years, and might have been their capital (Mate 1988: 47).

The Soratur (Dharwar) Kannada inscription of Chalukya Vikramavarsa (1091 CE), mentioned Mahalakshmi as the guardian deity of the village. The Kapil Kannada inscription recorded that Sobhaneyya, the administrator of Kolhapur, along with his wife, son, and daughter, donated land, and a house for the *angabhogas* of Mahalakshmi (Khare 1955: 97-99).

Two inscriptions in the precincts of the Mahalakshmi temple, dated Saka 1104 (1182) and 1112 (1190), mentioned grants for different types of services for the goddess and a monastery attached to the temple. An inscription, again from the temple, dated Saka 1140 (1218), stated that the image of

Mahalakshmi had a *linga* over its head, and a porch resembling the Himalaya mountain was erected in front of the temple (Khare 1955: 97-99). The city and its temples continued to receive benefaction from the successors of the Silaharas, viz. the Yadavas of Devagiri (Sankalia and Dixit 1952: 5).

IMAGE ON THE MOVE

Major Graham, political resident of the southern Maratha States, of which Kolhapur was the largest unit, wrote one of the finest accounts of the city and the state. Under Muslim regimes in Maharashtra, the deity was constantly on the move, mostly to the houses of its hereditary worshippers. According to Major Graham, sometime during the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, the image of Ambabai (Mahalakshmi) was hidden in a private dwelling (Graham 1854: 315-317). The temple was also desecrated, as could be verified from documentary and sculptural evidence.

During more than three hundred years of Muslim rule, only two persons of note were recorded to have visited Kolhapur for *darshana* of the goddess. Chaitanya, the great Vaishnava saint of Bengal, performed *kirtana* before the goddess in circa 1510 CE. Vadirajatirtha, of the Uttaradi Madhva Matha, visited Kolhapur in the latter half of the sixteenth century. In his *Teertha Prabandha*, he wrote,

> What is so surprising with the fact that goddess *ramaa* (*mahalakshmi*) is residing in *kolhapura kshetra*, a place which is full of numerous lakes each of which have numerous lotuses?....
>
> May goddess *mahalakshmi* ... be the reason for me having abundant prosperity! (*Teertha Prabandha* 2017).

Both saints addressed the goddess as Lakshmi and Rama respectively, meaning the wife of Vishnu.

The period of exile of the goddess from her ancient abode seemed to have been quite long. An extant *sanad* of Chhatrapati

Sambhaji Maharaj Bhonsle (1712-1760) of Kolhapur, dated 8th November 1723 CE, stated that though many people had risen to power and fame during the Adil Shahi regime, none had taken the trouble to restore the goddess, who was a refugee in the house of priests of her former seat. According to the *sanad*, Sambhaji alone had the merit of re-establishing the deity in her original temple (Graham 1854: 317).

On Dasara day, 26 September 1715 CE, Sidhoji Hindurao Ghorapade of Panhala at the command of Sambhaji Maharaj reinstated the image after removing it from a worshipper's house in Kapil Teerth Market. The triumphal re-entry of the goddess, Adi Shakti, into her own home was a momentous event in the history of the region (Mate 1988: 47-48). It was significant that in the same year and perhaps on the same day, the Vitthal image was reinstated in Pandharpur.

THE PRESENT IMAGE

Iconographic descriptions of the goddess were available from prior to the thirteenth century. The earliest came from the *Vishvakarmashastra,* quoted by Hemadri in his *Chaturvargachintamani*. It referred specifically to Karvirvasini Mahalakshmi. There were discrepancies between that description and the present image. The present image held a bowl in the lower left, not in the lower right hand, and the *shriphal* had replaced by the *mahalinga,* which was held in the lower right hand. The *Vishvakarmashastra* also made no mention of the *naga* hood.

A likely explanation for the differences between the textual references and the present image was that in the medieval period, when iconoclastic zeal was an incessant source of danger to temples and deities, Karvirvasini *devi* suffered the same fate. It was only after Maratha power had been firmly entrenched in the region that she could return to her ancient dwelling. It was not improbable that in the process of constant movement the image suffered some harm (Mate 1988: 32-34).

TULJAPUR

Tuljapur, a famous centre of pilgrimage in Osmanabad district, Maharashtra, was believed to mark the spot where goddess Bhavani killed the buffalo Asura (demon Mahisha). As Tulja was one of her many names (others being Tvarita, Tulaja, Bhavani, Amba), the town was named Tuljapur after her. The religious importance of the site was detailed in the *Tulaja Mahatmya*. Tulja Bhavani ranked among the revered Sakta *pithas* of India (Sircar 1998: 14-15).

The temple of Tulja/Bhavani was situated on one of the deep slopes on the ranges of Bala Ghat. It was raised over a small image of highly polished black basalt, about three feet high and eight-armed. The image was allegedly discovered in the dell by a Brahmin. Popular belief had it that it was left there by Tulja herself in commemoration of her great victory at the site (Mate 1988: 53, 57).

A rock about ten feet in diameter on the edge of the *ghat*, south of the village, was regarded the place where the goddess descended from heaven to fulfil her task against demon forces. A modern structure, the Ghatasila temple was raised over it (Burgess 1972: 3-4). According to oral tradition, that was also the place where Rama decided to proceed to Lanka in search of Sita. The goddess escorted Rama and Lakshmana up to that point, and awaited their return (Sontheimer 1991: 116).

The earliest recorded reference to Tulja was in a copper plate grant of 1204 CE. It mentioned the goddess as Turkai, and the *kshetra* as Tuljapur. The next available epigraph, dated 1398 CE, was from Kati village in Osmanabad district. It noted the donation by one Parashurama to Tulja *Mata* (Mate 1988: 59-60). The Marathi saint, Eknath composed numerous songs, "*bharuds*", appealing to Bhavani of Tuljapur to rise and come to the aid of the freedom-loving people of Maharashtra. Swami Ramdas regarded himself as a bard of the goddess and composed the famous "*Ramvardayini*" ("She who gave a boon to Rama"), in her honour.

The goddess was an important "religious base" of the Maratha movement in the seventeenth century (Zelliot and Berntsen 1988: 175). She was so celebrated that when the Maratha leader, Shivaji built Pratapgarh fort near Javli, "he set up there an image of his patron goddess Bhavani, as the more ancient Bhavani of Tuljapur was beyond easy reach to him" (Sarkar Vol. IV 1919: 23).[3] The shrine at the fort was a modest structure, its only redeeming feature being two stone lamp columns, or *dip malas*, "with tapering profiles and tiers of curving brackets." That became a pervasive feature of later religious complexes (Michell and Zebrowski 1999: 247).

SHRINE OF TULJA ATTACKED

In 1659 CE, while on way to meet Shivaji in the Western Ghats, the Bijapur general, Afzal Khan indulged in "wanton destruction and desecration" of Hindu temples. The indirect route he took from Bijapur to the Western Ghats indicated his resolve to desecrate temples of great sanctity to Hindus of Maharashtra. He thus reached Tuljapur determined to vandalise the sacred site (Eaton 1978: 183). *Sabhasad Bakhar*, a Marathi chronicle of the life and times of Shivaji, written in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, stated that Afzal Khan's army arrived at Tuljapur,

> Shri Bhavani, the patron deity of the Maharaja's family, was broken (into pieces), thrown into a hand-mill and powdered into dust. The chronicle added that a heavenly voice immediately pierced the atmosphere and told Afzal Khan that he would be dead within three weeks (Sen 1920: 9-10).

IMAGE OF TULJA

According to the contemporary poet Ajnyadas, Afzal Khan desecrated not only Bhavani of Tuljapur, but also the deities at Pandharpur, Pali, and Aundh. The ballads of Ajnyadas claimed that Afzal Khan erected a mosque at the site of the temple in Tuljapur. If so, the mosque seemed to have been removed subsequently, and the goddess re-established in her old dwelling, for no trace of a mosque-like structure around the temple survives (Mate 1988: 59).

The considerably later *Chitnis bakhar* stated that the priests at Tuljapur managed to remove the deity to safety, "He would have committed sacrilege upon the goddess but she was removed by the officiating priest" (Sen 1920: 183, 188). Legendary accounts and the verses of Swami Ramdas also indicated that there was great apprehension in Tuljapur and the Devi was removed to Pratapgarh fort. As the date of the verse in the *Chitnis bakhar* was tentative, the reference could either indicate that the original image was shifted before the violence of Afzal Khan, or a new replica image of Bhavani was installed (Mate 1988: 59). Whether the image was old or new, the *pitha* (place of residence of the deity) was ancient.

Numerous grants made by Maratha noblemen to goddess Bhavani from 1650 CE onwards survive. The grants made by members of the Bhonsle dynasty always referred to Bhavani as the *Kulaswamini* of their family, and stated that Tuljapur was an *"anadi" kshetra* of *jagrit devi.* The most significant grant was dated 1760 CE, just prior to the Maratha encounter with the Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali. The Peshwa invoked the divine powers of Bhavani when preparing to meet the challenge (Mate 1988: 60-61).

Hardly anything of the original temple of Tulja has survived. It seemed to have been a group of small shrines, with one or two small halls. The material of an older temple was used to rebuild the shrine. There was a damaged inscription on the outside of the enclosing wall. As that wall had also been partly rebuilt of old temple materials, that may not have been its original location. The inscription was mainly in Sanskrit with a segment in old Marathi. It recorded that Changdeva, the chief astrologer of the Yadava king Simghana, and grandson of the well-known astronomer Bhaskaracharya, sponsored a college for the study of the *Siddhantasiromani* and other works of his grandfather and other relatives. A family of Yadava feudatories endowed the college with land and other sources of income (Cousens 1931: 29).

KHANDOBA OF JEJURI

The leading centre of the worship of Khandoba in Maharashtra was Jejuri, near Poona. The *kshetra* consisted of two separate shrines, Karhe-pather and Gad-kot, with the former believed to be older. On the right hand side of the main gate was an object resembling a Shiva *linga*. It was known as *Savalakhacha bhunga*, a bee worth a lakh and a quarter rupees. According to a story attached to it –

Aurangzeb, in one of his campaigns in the Deccan, conquered the fort of Daulat Mangal. From the hill, he saw the Jejuri shrine and decided to attack it. His soldiers dug a small hole for placing dynamite to blow up the shrine. Hundreds of bees buzzed out of the hole and attacked the soldiers. So fierce was the assault of the bees that Aurangzeb was compelled to withdraw (Mate 1988: 162-164).

THE MANY FLIGHTS OF VITHOBA OF PANDHARPUR

Pandharpur in Sholapur district, Maharashtra was the main centre of worship of Vitthal or Vithoba. The *Panduranga Mahatmya* narrated the mythological story about Vithoba's presence at Pandharpur (Mate 1988: 189-193). During the course of his wanderings on earth, Rishi Narada saw the extraordinary dedication of Pundalika (possibly a Jain ascetic) to his aged parents and informed Krishna about it. Thereupon, both proceeded to the place where Pundalika was performing his familial duties. So engrossed was he in serving his parents that he threw a brick towards Krishna and asked him to wait. That was why god Vithoba stands on a brick, his arms akimbo (Deleury 1960: 144).

In an authoritative study, Ramchandra Chintaman Dhere highlighted Vitthal's links with pastoral hero cults, and traced his evolution from a shepherd deity to a major god of the Hindu pantheon. Dhere also revealed Vitthal's links with Buddhist and Jain traditions (Dhere 2011: 65-66).[4]

The image of Vithoba (*viru*, the "hero") developed from a primitive hero stone that commemorated a person who had died protecting cattle (Deleury 1960: 198).[5] According to G.D. Sontheimer, an overlooked *vira-kal* (hero stone) of the Yadava period must have been the site of the original Vitthal shrine at Pandharpur. It was built into a wall and wholly covered with soot and oil. It depicted a fight, the heads of cows, and *apsaras* accompanying the hero. The top portion of the stone was broken off, but probably showed the hero worshipping a *linga*. At some stage, the hero stone was given a human form as the present image of Vithoba. Since Krishna was the "protector of cows" *par excellence*, Vitthal became identified with him (Sontheimer 1982: 266-267).

Though Vitthal of Pandharpur was unquestionably the foremost deity of Maharashtra, he was originally a Kannada god. Namdev (1270-1350), one of the greatest devotees of Vithoba and a contemporary of Jnaneshvar, in one of his verses called Vitthal a "Kannada" – "The 'Kanada' Vitthal is standing on the banks of the Bhivara i.e. Bhima." "The 'darshan' of the Kanada is good, his name is good, his looks are pleasing." The Maharashtrian poet-saints, Jnanesvara (1275-1296) and Eknath (1533-1599), also mentioned Vitthal as a Kannada deity (Mate 1988: 188-189).

The saints of the Varkari *sampradaya* popularised the Vitthal cult among the Marathi-speaking people. Pandharpur emerged as an important centre of pilgrimage, not only in the Marathi-speaking areas; Kannada people also went to Pandharpur and Vitthal remained one of their favourite gods (Deleury 1960: 33-36).

The earliest known reference to Pandharpur was in a opper plate inscription dated 516 CE of the Rashtrakuta king, Avideya. It mentioned Pandarangapalli i.e. 'the village of Pandaranga,' but not Vitthal (Pandarangapalli could at some point have been the site of a Shiva temple. The number of Shiva temples in the *kshetra* indicated that Shiva was prominent n the area in ancient times. As Vithoba's importance grew, Shiva receded into the background; Vaudeville 2005b: 203). Dhere in fact pointed out that Vitthal exemplified the synthesis f Vaishnava and Shaiva elements, not only in Maharashtrian eligious life. He also highlighted Vitthal's likeness to Venkatesh of Tirupati.

Around 1175 CE, Bhillama V (r. 1175-1191) the first utonomous ruler of the Yadava dynasty, carved out a principality by capturing forts in the Konkan area. He began s a vassal of the Chalukyas of Kalyani and after their fall declared his sovereignty around 1187 CE. He fought the Hoysalas for control of the erstwhile Chalukya territories. He defeated them around 1189 CE, but was in turn overpowered two years later. He retreated towards Gujarat nd Malwa, while the Hoysalas withdrew towards Tamil Nadu Vaudeville 2005b: 201-202). Subsequently, Pandharpur again become part of Yadava territory (Deleury 1960: 193).

S.G. Tulpule (*An Old Marathi Reader*, 1960) deciphered an nscription at Pandharpur which suggested that a Vithoba emple may have existed as a small structure in 1189 CE Vaudeville 2005b: 201-202). An inscription on a pilaster of he earlier temple, used as an overhead beam in the present tructure, stated in Kanarese and Sanskrit, that the Hoysala king Vira-Somesvara in Samvat 1159 (1237 CE), gave a gift of gold to the god Vitthal (an older form of the name Vithoba). n its present location, parts of the inscription were covered by the overlapping capitals of the pillars below it, thus ndicating that it could not have been engraved in its present position. Between the existing temple and the river was part f an old temple that had been converted into a *chavadi*, police station. The pillars were *in situ*, and one of them had an inscription in Sanskrit verse recording that a subordinate chief, Kesavamandalika performed the *aptoryama* sacrifice in the temple of Panduranga Vitthal on the banks of the Bhimarathi in Samvad 1192 (1270 CE).That could have been the original temple of Vithoba (Cousens 1931: 64-65; Mate 1988: 196).

A Sanskrit copper plate inscription dated Saka 1171 (1249 CE), mentioned the city as Pundalika *kshetra*, implying that in the thirteenth century, Pandharpur was known as the place where *muni* Pundalika was honoured. The *kshetra* was described, 'in the vicinity of god Vishnu', which seemed to be Vithoba (Vaudeville 2005b: 202).

The Bhonsle rulers, the Peshwas, and several Maratha generals frequently visited the shrine. Shivaji's son, Rajaram made an annual grant to the temple, which was renewed by Shahu in 1707 CE (Mate 1988: 197).

PANDHARPUR ATTACKED

The popular belief that the Vijayanagara king, Krishnadeva Raya took the image of Vithoba to his kingdom to protect it from neighbouring Muslim princes has been discussed later in this work. But that was not the only moment the image was threatened.

After desecrating Tuljapur, the Bijapur general, Afzal Khan marched to Pandharpur with a cavalry of 10,000, and destroyed all the images he could find. The temple priests had, however, learnt of the sacrilege at Tuljapur, and removed the image of Vithoba before Afzal Khan's arrival. According to the nineteenth century *Sivadigvijaya bakher*, the head priest of Pandharpur sent a missive to Shivaji,

> It is your fond ambition to establish the Hindu faith; but the king of the Yavanas has sent a general to punish you. He has oppressed in various manners the Hindus, Brahmanas and cows of Tuljapur and Pandharpur. If you can protect us from his tyranny, then alone will Hinduism

> prosper...Otherwise...what shall we do in that case but commit suicide and throw upon you the sin thereof? But if this message fires you with rightful wrath, and you exert your valour and punish the Yavanas, a quarter of what virtue we have acquired in the past and may win in future by our religious performances will be yours; but for our sins we alone shall suffer (Sen 1920: 188-189).

A Unique Feature of the Vitthal Image

The *Panduranga Mahatmya* attributed to the *Padma Purana* (*PMPP*), as well as the one associated with the *Skanda Purana* (*PMSP*), both mentioned a unique feature of the Vitthal image at Pandharpur. Both texts stated that the six syllable *mantra* of Vitthal was carved directly over the image's heart. The *Panduranga Mahatmya* of the *Padma Purana* stated, "...wearing the Srivatsa on his chest, [and] a string of pearls consisting of six syllables..." (3.42). Elsewhere, the same text said, "the Vaijanti, the row of syllables, the Srivatsa, the forest garland..." (26.51). Further in that work, sage Vaisampayana described the six-syllable mantra, "The *anustubh* is its meter, Vyasa is its sage, the Lord of Sri is its deity; this *mantra* (*manuh*) is Vaisnava; it gave yogic power to Narada through its six syllables" (PMPP 27.10). The *Panduranga Mahatmya* from the *Skanda Purana* also clearly stated, "O divine sage, the syllables of a *mantra* are visible on his chest" (11.37). Other sources confirmed that unique feature of the image (Dhere 2011: 94-96).

Vithal Image at Madhe

The Vitthal image presently at Pandharpur did not have the name-*mantra*. An image in the Vitthal temple in village Madhe (in Madhe Taluka, Solapur District), had the *mantra* carved over the heart as indicated in both the *Panduranga Mahatmyas*. That image matched the description in the *Mahatmyas* better than the Pandharpur image in several other ways. So was the Vitthal image moved from Pandharpur to Madhe at some stage?

During the period of the Deccan Sultanates (15th-17th centuries), the image was shifted from Pandharpur on numerous occasions. Many Marathi saints narrated the story of Bhanudas (1448-1513), the great grandfather of Eknath, who was credited with retrieving the image from Vijayanagara where it had been taken for safekeeping (related in a later chapter in this work). Interestingly, the image in the courtyard of Eknath's home in Paithan was named "Vijay Vitthal." The name was linked to Vijayanagara's Vitthal, and the image was carved in Vijayanagara style. It was a small image and fitted with the tale that "god became small enough to fit into Bhanudas's saddle bag," when both returned from Vijayanagara.

V. K. Rajvade, who edited the lengthy Marathi inscription in Pandharpur called the "Eighty-four" inscription, provided important information about the removal of Vitthal,

> After Sake 1465 [AD 1543], the next major inauspicious period for the image of Vithoba of Pandharpur was about to occur at the hands of Afjhal Khan in Sake 1581 [AD 1659]. However, the Badves [Brahmin priests] are said to have removed the image in the nick of time and to have placed it in the village of Madhe, twenty miles from Pandharpur. Later, after Afjhal Khan had been killed, they brought the image back, and an independent temple and image of Vithoba were installed in Madhe in memory of this inauspicious period (Dhere 2011: 106)

The *Panduranga Mahatmya* from the *Skanda Purana* also stated that the image was taken to Madhe at the time of Afzal Khan's campaign. Pandharpur was again threatened when Aurangzeb camped at Brahmapuri near Pandharpur for four-five years, beginning in 1695 CE. Between Afzal Khan and Aurangzeb, there were other crises of a similar kind and the image was shifted to Cincoli, Gulsare, Degav, and other villages. There was even an occasion when a Badve priest hid the image to blackmail devotees, eager for *darshan*.

Dhere also cited the work of Kashinath Upadhyaya (also known as Baba Padhye), resident of Pandharpur and devotee of Vitthal of Pandharpur, who died in 1805. Kashinath Upadhyaya clearly stated that the image he saw everyday had the "six-syllable Krsna mantra" on its chest. That meant that the Vitthal image taken to Madhe at the time of Afzal Khan's invasion, was brought back when the threat subsided. That original image of Vitthal, with the *mantra* on it, was in Pandharpur certainly in 1805.

When the image was brought back, the people of Madhe, in honour of the god's stay, would have made an exact replica of the Pandharpur deity and kept it in their village. It remained the only known image that corresponded with the features of the original.

So when was the original image of Vitthal that resided in Pandharpur till 1805 CE, destroyed? In 1873, a deranged person threw a rock at the image and broke one of its legs, which was reported in several newspapers at the time. The Badves later claimed that as the image of Vitthal was *syambhu*, they had propped up the broken leg from the back and continued to worship it. They asserted the image was not replaced. But *shastric* injunctions were explicit that a damaged image should be immersed in water, and a new image instated after its *prana pratistha*. It was likely that the image was replaced after the attack of 1873 (Dhere 2011: 112-114).[6]

GOA – LAND OF DISPLACED GODS

Goa, Sanskrit *Gomantak*, the land of gods, was mentioned in the *Sahyadri Kand* of the *Skanda Purana*. It described the reclamation of the land from the sea by Parashuram, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Shiva also took up temporary residence there after he left his Himalayan abode (Fonseca 1986: 115-116). Goa experienced tremendous loss of its sacred heritage in the medieval period.

SAPTAKOTISVARA *LINGA* RESTORED BY MADHAVA-MANTRI

Goa was ruled by the Kadambas from the tenth century, but was conquered by the Bahmani Sultanate in the mid-fourteenth century (Fonseca 1986: 121-129). During the period of Bahmani control, the *linga* of Saptakotisvara was hidden by devotees. Subsequently, the Vijayanagara rulers succeeded in wresting a large part of the western coast, including Goa. Madhava-mantri was appointed governor of Goa. He was a great scholar, and undertook the reconstruction of the shrine of Saptakotisvara and reinstallation of the *linga* (Fonseca 1986: 12). He laid the foundations of *brahmapuris* in several places in Goa, in a bid to revive Vedic learning.

An inscription stated that Madhava-mantri established an *agrahara* for twelve learned Brahmins of different *gotras* in the name of his mother, Macambika. The grant was made in the presence of the deities Saptanathadeva and Triyambakadeva, and also Brahmins and *purohitas*. The deity Saptanathadeva was clearly Saptakotisvara (Ritti 2017: 102).

Another inscription described how Madhava-mantri ousted the *Turuska* groups from Goa and re-consecrated the Saptanatha and other *lingas* that had been uprooted, "and made the trees of *dharma* sprout again which were burnt by the flames of fire of the wicked" (Ritti 2017: xxxiii, 105).

PORTUGUESE DEVASTATIONS

Goa was divested of its hallowed sites during the period of Portuguese political ascendancy. A letter by Andre Corsali, dated 6th January 1515, mentioned an early instance of violation,

> In this island of Goa and of the whole of India there are innumerable ancient edifices of the gentiles and in a little neighbouring island that is called Divari, the Portuguese in order to build the land (town) of Goa, have destroyed an ancient temple called a pagoda which was built with

> wonderful skill, with ancient figures of a certain black stone worked with very great perfection... (Priolkar 1961: 65).

In 1545, the Vicar General, Fr. Minguel Vaz with Diogo Borba prepared a 41-point plan to effect the conversion of natives. Point No. 3 stated,

> Since idolatry is so great an offence against God, as is manifest to all, it is just that Your Majesty (king of Portugal) should not permit it within your territories, and an order should be promulgated in Goa to the effect that in the whole island there should not be any temple public or secret, contravention whereof should entail grave penalties; that no official should make idols in any form, neither of stone, nor of wood, nor of copper, nor of any other metal; and that no Hindu festival should be publicly celebrated in the whole island... (Priolkar 1961: 73-73).

A report submitted to the king on 12th December 1567 gave particulars of some campaigns to destroy temples (Priolkar 1961: 79).

In 1560, the temple of Saptanatha was destroyed by the Portuguese and a chapel constructed at the site with material from the demolished temple. A devotee took the *linga* to Bicholim, where it was consecrated. Subsequently, the Maratha leader, Shivaji had a temple built for the *linga*.

At the time of the Portuguese advent, there were at least 124 distinct temples for 564 divinities in Goan villages. The temples were subjected to large-scale destruction by the Portuguese; many were converted into churches. The temple in a village near Bassein in the North Provinces was pulled down around 1550 by Melchior Goncalves, who noted that it was an important pilgrimage centre and many people used to come from Cambay (Gujarat) for worship. He remarked it was filled with paintings of three gods, *Isper, Bramaa*, and *Vismaa* "by which they try to fool those who are ignorant, saying that they also have a Trinity." A huge stone cross was planted on top of the rubble heap.

In several cases, temple structures were burnt or demolished stone by stone. All materials that could be used went into the construction of churches. Metal images were melted and used to make church ornaments. In the Salcete territory, all temples in 58 of the 76 villages were destroyed. The Jesuits estimated the big temples to number 280, while the small temples were "innumerable."

The wood of the Lakshmi temple in Sancoale village was utilized in making the church of St. Lourenco. The images of Daro (Dhaddo), Pormando (Paramameda), Narana (Narayana) Baguaonte (Bhagavati), Hesporo (Ishwara, Shiva) were burnt, beaten to pulp, and thrown in the river,

> A guru (guru of the temple is the gentile who cleans the temple and sweeps it, who decorates it and adores its idols; he lives next to the temple and eats the offerings) cried so much as it is possible to cry for the death of the good king (Xavier and Zupanov 2015: 73, 122-127).

Deities Shifted for Fear of the Portuguese

The church at Benaulim was built in 1581 at the site of the temple where the arrow of Parashuram was believed to have fallen. The temple of Mahalasa originally stood at Velham (Old Mardol), where it was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1567. The image was secreted away, till a new temple was constructed in the late seventeenth century. The deities in the Lakshmi-Narasimha temple were shifted from Sancoale village in Salcete to Veling in 1567, and re-consecrated there. The icons of the Ramnathi temple at Ramnathim were relocated at the present site in the mid-sixteenth century. The image of Brahma was taken from Karmali village to Satlari and from there to Valpoi, in the face of continuing Portuguese danger.

Mahalakshmi

The image of Mahalakshmi in Taleigao village was moved to Mayem in Bicholin Taluka in the sixteenth century. It remained ere till 1817. Narayan Mhamai Kamat then brought it to anjim, and hid it at a place where today stands the People's igh School. The corner of the school where the deity was ept hidden is still venerated. Narayan Mhamai Kamat later moved the deity to his own house. Subsequently he sought ermission from the liberal Portuguese governor, Conde De io Pardo to build a temple, which was granted in 1818. The ahalakshmi temple at Panaji was the first temple the ortuguese permitted to be built in Goa after three hundred ears of persecution. The temple was completed in 1819. The iginal deity today lies in a small box in the rear wall of the mple which faces the present icon of Mahalakshmi.

HANTA DURGA TEMPLE (NORTH GOA)

everal other images were removed during the inquisition, mong them the image of Shanta Durga (an incarnation of arvati). The deity was shifted from Mapusa to Sanquelim, en part of the Maratha kingdom of Sawantwadi. ubsequently it was installed at Dhargal in Pernem in 1550, en also a principality of Sawantwadi.

HANTA DURGA AT KAVALEM (CENTRAL GOA)

n image of Shanta Durga was relocated from Keloshi to avalem during the exodus of the 1560s. In the first half of e eighteenth century, Naro Ram Mantri, a devotee of the oddess and a minister of Shahu Maharaj of Satara, built a mple for the deity and persuaded the vassal king of Sonda contribute village land for its upkeep.

HANTA DURGA AT FATORPA (SOUTH GOA)

nother temple of Shanta Durga originally stood at Cuncolim. was destroyed by the Portuguese in the 1570s. The image as taken to the village of Fatorpa in Quepem taluka, where new temple was constructed. That was also destroyed by he Portuguese. The temple was rebuilt in the time of hhatrapati Shahu (*Swarajya* Vol. 62 Issue 04).

NOTES

1. The undying veneration of sacred shrines never ceased to manifest itself. The old shrine of Ambarnatha, located in the small village of Ambarnatha roughly four km from Kalyan, in Thana district, was the earliest dated example of the Dakhan style of architecture. When Henry Cousens visited the site in the early twentieth century, it was practically in disuse. However, a solitary pujari attended to the *linga* once or twice a day, offering a few flowers. An inscription engraved on a beam, recorded that the temple was built (possibly upon the site of an older one) in Saka 982 (1060 CE) during the reign of the Silahara chief, Mummuni or Mamvani (Cousens 1931: 13-15).
2. The Naganatha temple was unique and formed a class by itself in the Marathwada region. The name Aundha occurred in two epigraphs – (a) Ardhapur Epigraph of 1192 CE, and b) Ranjana epigraph from the Narasimha temple; first in the records of the Rashtrakuta period and then in the epigraphs of the twelfth century CE. It was referred to in those inscriptions as Amardakapura. It was once a capital of the Rattas of Ardhapur in Nanded district. The temple itself contained two inscriptions in Kanarese letters, datable to the twelfth century CE. Ramachandra of Devagiri visited the temple as a pilgrim following his family custom (Aundha epigraph of 1278 CE), clearly indicating the importance and sanctity of the temple (Deglurkar 1974: 45).
3. Bhavani was Shivaji's saviour, "stepping in at those moments in which the *avatara*-king (was) most under duress." These included his encounter with Afzal Khan, after the latter had desecrated her shrine. She was said to have come to him in a dream and promised help in killing the iconoclast. She herself acted through the Maratha leader in avenging Afzal Khan. Subsequently, Shivaji was protected from the Mughal general, Shaista Khan sent by Aurangzeb to arrest him. The goddess entered Shivaji's body and told him how to defeat the general. It was with Bhavani's blessings that Shivaji also managed to flee from Mughal captivity at Agra (Copland, Mabbett, Roy 2012: 149).

4. Vitthal became a form of Vishnu-Krishna in the twelfth-thirteenth century. The original worshippers of Vitthal were pastoral groups like the Gollas and Kurubas in Andhra and Karnataka, and the Gavlis and Dhangars of Maharashtra. Several royal families like the Holkars had pastoral origins. The first kings of Vijayanagara, who built the temple of Vijayvitthal, also claimed to be "of the clan of Yadu" (Dhere 2011: 237-238).
5. In her book, *Lokasahityaci Ruparekha* (1956), Durga Bhagavat, noted scholar of folk culture, pointed to Vitthal's pastoral roots, "Vithoba of Pandhari is a perfect instance of the unified culture of not only Karnataka and Maharashtra but also Andhra. Although these three regions differ in language, their culture is one. This is a wonder of the world of culture. This cultural unity has blossomed in the pastoralist culture of the hilly rural areas of these three regions. Vitthal is Kanada. He is a Gavli cow-heard. He wears a black blanket over his shoulder. Rahi and Rukmini are his two wives. Elsewhere Rahi or Radha is Krsna's beloved; in Maharashtra she has become his wife. Vitthal's true wife is Rukmini, but he is not the kind of husband who is overly involved with her. The couple has separate temples in Pandharpur. The *ovis* say, Rahi has arrived, and so Rukmini is sulking. The *Pandhari Mahatmya* says the same thing. But a story that Dhangars told me gives a delightful reason for this couple's strange, extended separation..." (Dhere 2011: 234-236).
6. Renowned anthropologist and sociologist, Iravati Karve presented an insightful account of her pilgrimage to Pandharpur,

   "... I was getting to know my Maharashtra anew every day. I found a new definition of Maharashtra: the land whose people go to Pandharpur for pilgrimage. When the palanquin started from Pune, there were people from Pune, Junnar, Moglai, Satara, etc. Every day people were joining the pilgrimage from Khandesh, Sholapur, Nasik, and Berar. As we neared Pandharpur, the pilgrimage was becoming bigger and bigger. All were Marathi-speaking – coming from different castes, but singing the same songs, the same verses of the Varkari cult, speaking to each other, helping each other, singing songs to each other. The only Maharashtrian area not represented was Konkan, the District of the Maharashtrian seacoast. When I enquired about this, I was told that the Ashadh month's pilgrimage was for the plateau people; the month of Kartik would bring out the whole of Konkan. Ashadh was their time for work in the fields, so naturally, they could not leave...

I witnessed how the language and culture of Maharashtra had spread among all its social layers. The fine poetry of five centuries was recited daily. The poetry embodied a religion and a philosophy. People speaking many dialects sang the same verses and thus learnt a standard language. Their learning was achieved in a massive dose but without pain or compulsion ..." (Karve 1988: 158-159).

11

Eastern India

Some instances of desecration of temples and images in Eastern India cited in this section reiterate the significance of temples beyond their royal patrons. Ordinary people remembered them centuries after the sites had been forcibly occupied and the structures no longer existed. Temples demolished were rebuilt. In the case of the Jagannath temple, the repeated destruction of images evoked an incredibly innovative response.

ADINA MOSQUE AT PADUA – ATTEMPTED RECLAMATION IN THE 20th CENTURY

The Adina (Friday) mosque at Padua, the largest in medieval India, was built by Sultan Sikandar Shah (r. 1358-89), son and successor of Shams ud din Ilyas Shah (r. 1352-58), founder of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty. An inscription on the mosque dated 1375 CE proclaimed Sikandar Shah as "the most perfect of the Sultans of Arabia and Persia ...". That was an open declaration that the political and cultural orientation of the Ilyas Shahi kings "lay, not in Delhi or Central Asia, but much further to the west – in Mecca, Medina, Shiraz, and ancient Ctestiphon." There was no reference to any sovereign of the Indian subcontinent, "where he was actually ruling" (Eaton 1994: 47, 50).

On a visit to the region in 1879-80, Alexander Cunningham noted the use of material from Hindu shrines in the construction of the mosque,

> The steps leading to the pulpit have fallen down and, on turning over one of the steps I found a line of Hindu sculpture of very fine and bold execution. This stone is four feet in length, and apparently formed part of a frieze. The main ornament is a line of circular panels 7 ½ inches in diameter, formed by continuous intersecting lotus stalks. There are five complete panels and two half-panels which have been cut through. These two contain portions of an elephant and a rhinoceros. In the complete panels there are 1) a cow and calf; 2) human figures broken; 3) a goose; 4) a man and woman, and a crocodile; 5) two elephants. In the niche itself, the two side pillars which support the cusped arch are also pickings from Hindu temples (Cunningham 1882: 92).

J.D. Beglar (1845-1907), who served as assistant to Cunningham and examined the mosque soon after him, concluded that a group of seventh century post-Gupta temples had stood on the site. Beglar also found the pedestal of a statue, with the fragment of an inscription in post-Gupta letters (Beglar 1966; Mishra 1999: 218).

In 1932-33, S.K. Saraswati (1906-1980), noted Bangladeshi historian of art and architecture, commenced his survey of the region from Pandua (the Hindu city of Pandunagara, mentioned in coins issued by Danujamarddana Deva and Mahendra in 1417-18 CE) (Chakrabarti 2001: 88). He found Hindu materials *in situ* in the mosque,

> The existence of lofty temples may be incontestably proved by the numerous Hindu remains, both architectural and

> sculptural, which still exist at Pandua – some lying loose, and others built into Adina Masjid, the Eklakhi tomb, the buildings around the shrine of Nur Qutb Alam and Shah Jalal, and even into the arches of the old bridge on the road to the south of Pandua... An examination of the stones used in the construction of the Adina mosque (one of them being a Sanskrit inscription recording a mere name, *Indranatha*, in characters of the ninth century A.D.) and those lying about in heaps all around, reveals the fact, which no careful observer can deny, that most of them came from temples that once stood in the vicinity. In many cases these Hindu materials were possibly not taken from distant edifices, but are still *in situ*. The plinth mouldings of the mosque have striking similarities with those of the *jangha* of a Hindu temple (Saraswati 1932: 174-175).

Subsequently, several scholars endorsed the assessment that Adina mosque was built from earlier structures that probably dated to the seventh-eighth century CE. Nirod Bhusan Roy observed, "This magnificent structure equaling in size the Great mosque of Damascus was built by the spoliation of Hindu and Buddhist shrines" (Roy 2004: 113).

According to Khoundkar Alamgir, "a good number" of early Muslim monuments were built in this manner. He cited the example of the Chehelghazi mosque at Dinajpur. In the case of the Small Golden Mosque at Gaur, Chapai Nawabganj, there had been several icons on the opposite side of the *mihrab* that were now in the British Museum. Images at the back of a Sultanate *mihrab* were exhibited at the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi (Alamgir 2014: 262-263). Khoundkar Alamgir stated that the Adina mosque served the same purpose at the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in Delhi,

> It impressed the non-Muslims of this country. It is also to be noted that Sultan Sikandar Shah assumed for himself in his coins the title of *Imam* or *Imam al 'Azam*, a word synonymous with *Khalifa* for the first time in Bengal (Alamgir 2014: 255-256).

This view was contested by historian Richard Eaton,

> Although its builders reused a good deal of carved stone from pre-conquest monuments, the mosque does not appear to have been intended to convey a message of political subjugation to the region's non-Muslims, who in any event would not have used the structure (Eaton 1994: 42).

Eaton did not elucidate how non-use of the mosque by "the region's non-Muslims" (Hindus?) obliterated its political message. Surely the mosque, the largest in medieval India, would have been built for the exclusive use of believers, however numerically miniscule. It would hardly have been intended to serve as a common prayer site open to all faiths. Its declaration of might would have been understood by the worsted people.

No less intriguing was the analysis offered by Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot. They argued that "on the surface" the mosque was intended to visually proclaim the early Sultans of Bengal as ideal Islamic kings. However, on the mosque's *qibla* wall, "nearly all the forty-one arched *mihrabs* or niches are adorned with hanging lamps, references to a verse in the Quran that likens god's presence to a 'light in a niche'." As Sufi orders commonly used light imagery "to express god's inner qualities," that made the greatest impression on the people of Bengal; "not the inscriptions in an alien script few could read... " (Asher and Talbot 2006: 86). By this reasoning, people whose places of worship had been pulled down before their eyes, would have been won over by the hanging lamps that adorned the mihrabs!

A startling turn of events in the early twentieth century demonstrated the incongruity of such explanations. In the 1920s, the Santhals of Malda protested against the loss of their occupancy rights in land. The Bengal Tenancy Act (1885) that was extended to the Santhals in 1923 had failed to protect their interests. Land was a powerful link between a Santhal nd his ancestors; it formed "part of his spiritual possession s well as economic heritage." Loss of land meant "loss of dentity."

Jitu Santhal spearheaded a movement against exploitation f Santhals by the zamindars, allegedly in collusion with the ritish. Jitu was inspired by Gandhi *baba* (Mahatma Gandhi), vhom he saw as the messiah of the poor. From 1926 onwards, itu preached to his followers that after a final battle at Padua, dina mosque would be seized and Jitu's *raj* commence.

In October 1932, Muslim zamindars of Kotwali demanded wo-thirds of the crop from the Santhals, who refused to omply. In December 1932, Jitu led a considerable number of anthals to Pandua and occupied Adina masjid. He declared t was actually the temple of Adinath (Shiva) that had been onverted into a mosque, and Santhals would perform *puja* or Goddess Kali in its precincts.

Jitu openly declared himself a *Senapati* of Gandhi *baba* and foretold the end of British rule. The district administration sent a large force to quell the revolt. A pitched battle was fought when the Santhals refused to vacate the masjid. Six Santhals, including Jitu were shot dead. The police entered the mosque and captured the remaining rebels (Sarkar 2008: 30-36). The episode was a stirring affirmation that memory of the shrines at Padua had lingered on for centuries.

ASSAM – KAMAKHYA TEMPLE DESTROYED AND REBUILT

The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* mentioned Assam as Pragjyotisa. According to the *Mahabharata*, at a site named Pandunath at the western end of Nilachal Hill, the Pandava brothers took a ceremonial bath in the Lauhitya River after their period of *ajyatavas* was over. They then worshipped goddess Kamakhya to regain their lost kingdom (Bhuyan and Nayak 2010: 9).

The *Kalika Purana*, composed in the tenth century CE, explained the meaning of Pragjyotisa, "Formerly Brahma staying here created the stars; so the city is called Pragjyotisapura, a city equal to the city of Indra" (Barua and Murthy 1988: 1). The *Kalika Purana* also stated that Naraka, son of the Varaha incarnation of Vishnu, established a township (*puri*) and subjugated Pragjyotisa, which was in the midst of Kamarupa. He subsequently brought priests (*dvijas*, Brahmins) and other people from northern India and settled them there. The *Kalika Purana* indicated that some Kirata kingdoms once existed in the region and Kamakhya was their deity. Naraka was said to have defeated the last Kirata king, Ghataka, and assumed custody of the Kamakhya *yonimandala* of Pragjyotisa (Bhuyan and Nayak 2010: 2-5, 10-11, 13-14).

E.A. Gait (1863-1950), who served as Assistant Commissioner of Assam and, from 1890 as Provincial Superintendent for the 1891 census in the region, linked the word Pragjyotisa to astrology. He stated,

> Prag means former or eastern and jyotisha a star, astrology, shining. Pragjyotishpur may, therefore, be taken to mean the City of Eastern Astrology. The name is interesting in connection with the reputation which the country has always held as a land of magic and incantation and with the view that it was in Assam that the Tantrik form of Hinduism originated (Gait 1906: 15).

Ibn Battuta, during his visit to the region, observed the commonness of spells, "the inhabitants of these mountains ... are noted for their devotion to and practice of magic and witchcraft" (*Rehla* 1953: 237-38).

The modern name Assam was linked to the Shans, who entered the Brahmaputra valley in the thirteenth century CE, and were known as Ahoms. According to Ahom tradition, Assam derived from *Asama*, meaning "unequalled," or "peerless" (Barua and Murthy 1988: 3). Kamrup, the modern district of Assam, acquired its name from the great kingdom of Kamarupa (also known as Bhauma). The earliest epigraphic reference to Kamarupa occurred in the Allahabad inscription f Samudragupta (Barua and Murthy 1988: 9-14).

Kamarupa became unrivalled as a centre of Tantric culture y absorbing the popularity of other Yoni *tirthas* at a fairly arly date (Sircar 1998: 15; Barua and Murthy 1988: 19-26; Ramos 017: 43). The *Hevajra Tantra*, a Buddhist text dated to the eventh-eighth century CE, listed four regions as *pithas*, seats f the Goddess. These were – 1) Jalandhara, 2) Odiyana Uddiyana in the Swat valley), 3) Purnagiri, and 4) Kamarupa. 'he *Kalika Purana* stated,

> Among ... renowned *pithas*, the Nilacala is said to be the most sacred place. Thus it is called *mahapitha*, in which the fundamental form of the goddess resides (Sircar 1998: 12-13; Ramos 2017: 45-46).

The *yoni* of Sati was located in the inner sanctum of the amakhya temple. It took the form of a fissure in a large rock hat was often filled with water from an underground spring Ramos 2017: 46). The temple was unique among Devi temples n India in that it enshrined no image of the deity (Barua and Murthy 1988: 27).

The site was an important religious and political centre or many ancient and medieval dynasties, among them the Pala, Koch, and Ahom. Scattered stone sculptures, many of he Pala period, indicated that the temple was built on the uins of an older temple also dedicated to Kamakhya (Ramos 2017: 46-49). Three successive stages of building could be learly seen in the temple (Barua and Murthy 1988: 35).

TEMPLE DESTROYED IN 1553

The Kamakhya temple was destroyed in 1553 CE by the iconoclast Kala Pahar (Ramasso 2010: 162-163). He was said to have been a Brahmin, named Rajiv Lochan Roy (other accounts described him as an Afghan). He was ostracized from his community following his marriage to the daughter of Sultan Sulaiman Karrani of Bengal (r. 1565-1572). After the marriage

Rajiv Lochan Roy wanted to live as a Brahmana and went to Puri, perhaps to undergo a purificatory ceremony. The Brahmins there refused to accept him, whereupon he became a staunch Muslim and took the name Kala Pahar. He resolved to avenge his humiliation by destroying Hindu temples. He invaded Kamarupa and sacked the Kamakhya temple, the ruins of which were scattered all over the hill (Barua and Murthy 1988: 32; Bhuyan and Nayak 2010: 17). [Some scholars, however, attribute the destruction of the temple to the invasion of Hussein Shah in 1498].

Rebuilt a Decade Later

The present Kamakhya temple was built in 1565 CE, by Naranarayan, one of the illustrious kings of the Koc kingdom (founded by an upwardly mobile tribal family, Eaton 1994: 187-188; Barpujari Vol. II 1992: 73). The reconstruction seemed to have been done over the ground plan of the earlier temple (Sarma 1981-82).

When Naranarayan's army had invaded Bengal, it had suffered serious reverses and his brother Chila Rai was taken prisoner. Tradition has it that during his incarceration, Chila Rai was informed in a dream that the reason for his plight was that he had engaged in war with the Sultan of Bengal without rebuilding the Kamakhya temple (Barua and Murthy 1988: 32-33).

After his release, Chila Rai set out to rectify his mistake. He and his brother, Naranarayan participated in the dedicatory ceremony of the temple. According to the *Vamsavali,* the king offered 3 lakhs of *hom* and 1 lakh sacrifices. Besides gifting lands, fisheries, musical instruments, utensils of gold, silver, copper and bell-metal, the king gave as *shebaits* or *paiks*, families of Brahmins, Ganaks, Nats, Bhats, Tantis, Malis, Kamars, Kahars, Barhoi (carpenters), washer-men, oil-pressers, sweet-meat makers, gold-smiths, potters, leather-workers, fishermen, and scavengers for service in the temple.

Naranarayan had statues of himself and his brother installed t the shrine, where they could still be seen (Barua Bahadur 933: 297-299; Bhuyan and Nayak 2010: 22; Ramos 2017: 53). An inscription on a stone tablet in the temple stated,

> Glory to King Malla Deva (Naranarayan), who by virtue of his mercy, is kind to the people, who in archery is like Arjuna, and in charity like Dadhichi and Karna; he is like an ocean of all goodness; and is versed in many Sastras; his character is excellent; in beauty he is as bright as Kandarpa, he is a worshipper of Kamakhya. His younger brother, Sukladev (Chila Rai) built this temple of bright stones on the Nila hillock, for the worship of the Goddess Durga in 1487 Saka (1565 A.D.). His beloved brother, Sukladhvaj, again, with universal fame, the crown of the greatest heroes, who, like the fabulous Kalpataru, gave all that was devoutly asked of him, the chief of all devotees of the Goddess, constructed this beautiful temple with heaps of stones on the Nila hill in 1487 Saka (1565 CE) (Gait 1906: 57; Barua Bahadur 1933: 299-300).

The Ahoms also recognized the tremendous popularity of goddess Kamakhya. King Pratap Singha (1603-41) introduced Durga puja in Assam, using earthen images made by image-makers brought from Bengal. The great Ahom ruler, Rudra Singha (r. 1696-1714) invited Krishnaram Bhattacharya, renowned *mahant* of the Shakta sect in Shantipur (Bengal), to settle on Kamakhya hill. He died before his scheme could be implemented. Before his death, he advised his son, Shiva Singha to give the religious leader responsibility of the Kamakhya temple. Shiva Singh (1714-1744) made many land grants to the temple. His brother and successor, Pramatta Singha (1744-1751), continued the royal patronage. In his reign, a *Phalgutsava Doul* or *Phakua Doul* was built on Nilachal. An inscription there began with the words *Sri Rama*. That was an interesting instance of Vaishnavism in an area of shakta-tantrik worship (Bhuyan and Nayak 2010: 23-24, 17-18).

An earthquake in 1897 destroyed the domes of almost all temples at Kamakhya, except the main one. Maharaja Rameshwara Prashad Singh, zamindar of Darbhanga state in Bihar, camped at Kamakhya and restored the temples (Bhuyan and Nayak 2010: 25).

JAGANNATH TEMPLE AT PURI

The *Puranas* contained several references to Puri as a place of pilgrimage.[1] The *Anargharaghava Nataka*, a ninth-tenth century CE play by Murari Mishra, mentioned the god Purushottama (later identified with Jagannath) on the eastern sea-shore and his "Yatra" (possibly Car-festival). A tenth century inscription in the Saraswati temple at Maihar in Madhya Pradesh also identified Purushottama with the 'Odra' (Orissa) country, i.e. the area around Puri (Tripathi 1986: 37-39). Shankaracharya was said to have visited Puri and founded the Gobardhana *matha* there in the eighth century CE.

The present temple of Jagannath at Puri was constructed by Anantavarman Codagangadeva of the Eastern Gangas (r. 1078-1147) (Panda 2013: 55-57). A devotee of Shiva Gokarnesvara, he also built the Jagannath temple, exalting a popular local cult. An inscription eulogized his achievement,

> ... What king can be named that could erect a temple to such a god as Purusottama. Whose feet are the three worlds, whose navel is the entire sky, whose ears the Cardinal points, whose eyes the sun and moon and whose head the heaven (above)? This task which had hitherto been neglected by previous kings was fulfilled by Gangesvara (Mubayi 2005: 18).

Anantavarman and his successors raised Purushottama to a *rashtra devata* and dedicated their kingdom to Purushottama-Jagannath. At the time it was built, the temple was higher than any other in Orissa (Stietencron 1986: 1).

STONE IMAGE OF JAGANNATH TAKEN TO DELHI

Meanwhile, in 1202 CE, Lakshmana Sena, the last great Hindu ruler of Bengal, was defeated by the Turkish forces led by Bakhtiyar Khalji (*Riyazu-s-Salatin* 1902: 62-63). Three years later, Muslim troops entered Orissa for the first time. In 1211, Orissa was attacked again, this time by a new Muslim ruler in Bengal (Kulke 1986a: 153). In 1361, the Delhi Sultan, Feroz Shah Tughlaq marched to Orissa and destroyed the stone image of Jagannath. The wooden image of the deity was, however, saved. Zia-ud-din Barni recorded,

> It is reported that inside the Rai's fort there was a stone idol which the infidels called Jagannath, and to which they paid their devotions. Sultan Firoz, in emulation of Mahmud Subuktigin, having rooted up the idol, carried it away to Delhi, where he subsequently had it placed in an ignominious position (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 314).

RITUALS CONTINUED COVERTLY

Thereafter, the Jagannath cult remained overtly inactive, but rituals continued at regional temples and secret sites. Orissa prospered in the fifteenth century under the Gajapatis, successors to the Gangas.[2] The situation changed in the sixteenth century, with the establishment of a powerful Muslim dynasty in Bengal. In 1512, Sultan Quli Qutb Shah of Golconda declared himself independent of the Bahmani Sultanate and commenced systematic raids in the Godavari region and Orissa. In 1564-65, the Mughal Emperor, Akbar entered into an alliance with the Gajapati ruler, Mukunda Deva (a Telugu by birth) against their common enemy Sultan Sulaiman Karrani of Bengal. However in 1568, just three years after the defeat of Vijayanagara in the battle of Talikota, when Akbar was engaged in the siege of Chittor, the Bengal ruler sent his general Kala Pahar to Orissa. Mukunda Deva was killed, and Kala Pahar, a notorious iconoclast, attacked the Jagannath temple.

The *Riyazu-s-Salatin* recorded that the wooden image (images?) of Jagannath (and Balabhadra and Subhadra?) were taken to Bengal and publicly burnt on the banks of the Hooghly. According to the *Makhzan-i-Afghana* (1612 CE) of Ni'mat Allah,

> ...every Afghan, who took part in the campaign, obtained as booty one or two gold images. Kala Pahar destroyed the temple of Jagannath in Puri which contained 700 idols made of gold, the biggest of which weighed 30 *mans* (Rahim 1961: 177f).

Badauni wrote that Kala Pahar, "conquered the city of Katak-u-Banaras, that mine of heathenism, and made the stronghold of Jaganat'h into the home of Islam" (*Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh* Vol. II 1990: 166). *Cakoda Pothi*, a local Oriya chronicle stated, "there was a complete anarchy (*arajaka*) and nobody was there to care of gods and Brahmanas" (Kulke 2013: 69).

Orissa remained an arena of struggle between the Mughals and Afghans for the next few decades, till Raja Man Singh defeated the Afghans in 1590, and declared Puri and its hinterland Mughal crown lands (Mubayi 2005: 18-19, 38; Kulke 2013: 70). During those politically stormy decades, the Bhois of Khurda emerged as successors of the Gajapatis.

HUMBLE DEVOTEE SAVED *'BRAHMAPADARTHA'*

The temple chronicle, *Madala Panji* (compiled around 1600 CE) related that after the desecration by Kala Pahar, an Oriya named Bisar Mohanty recovered the *'Brahmapadartha'* (life substance) from the Jagannath image, and hid it in his drum, *mrdanga*. He brought it to a place called Kujanga, where it was worshipped in secret till 1586.

Andrew Stirling (1793?-1830), Private Secretary to Acting Governor General W.B. Bayley, who authored a valuable work on Orissa, described this episode,

> The adventures of the great Idol form a curious episode in

> the history of this important period. According to the *Mandala Panji*, when the priests at Pooree saw the turn which matters were taking, they again for the third time in their annals, hurried away the helpless god in a covered cart, and buried him in a pit at Parikud, on the Chilka Lake. Kalapahar was not however to be defrauded of so rich a prize, and having traced out the place of concealment, he dug up Juggernaut and carried him off on an elephant, as far as the Ganges, after breaking in pieces every image in the Khetr. He then collected a large pile of wood, and setting fire to it, threw the idol on the burning heap. A bystander snatching the image from the flames threw it into the river. The whole proceeding had been watched by Besar Mainti, a faithful votary of Juggernaut, who followed the half burnt image as it floated down the stream, and at last when unperceived, managed to extract from it the sacred part (Brahm or spirit in the original), and brought it back secretly to Orissa, where it was carefully deposited in charge of the Khandait of Kujang (Stirling 1846: 102).

In 1586, Ramachandra of Khurda (son of a minister in the
ourt of Mukunda Deva) summoned Bisar Mohanty and
btained the *'Brahmapadartha'* he had retrieved from the image.
y a *vanayaga* ritual, that was inserted in a new image of
agannath; which made it essentially the same as the one which
ishnu himself had set up for the mythical First Indradyumna
n the hoary past.

EW IMAGE OF JAGANNATH

amachandra installed the image first in his own palace and,
n 1590 in the Jagannath temple in Puri. In a grand ceremony,
e received the sacred *sarhi* turban and was hailed as the
'Second Indradyumna." The "courageous renewal" of the
agannath cult by Ramachandra, first at Khurda and then at
uri, was a major event in the cultural and religious history of
rissa. It "healed the trauma of Jagannath's destruction by
he recurrence of his sacred Brahma portion..." (Kulke 2013:
1).

Due to his historical and legendary achievements, Ramachandra and his successors were acknowledged throughout Orissa as the new Gajapatis. That found expression in the reckoning of the regnal *(anka)* years of the Khurda rajas in Orissa, even outside the territory of Khurda proper (Kulke 1986: 329).

The Khurda dynasty remained in power in Orissa throughout the period of Mughal dominance, followed by that of the Bengal Nawabs, and from the mid-18th century, the Marathas. A number of independent and semi-independent feudatory states (Garhjat, or 'fortress born'), proliferated during those times, particularly in central and western Orissa. That created a shift in the balance of political and ritual authority (Mubayi 2005: 19).

Jagannath in Exile

From the time of the re-instatement of the images in the Jagannath temple in 1590 till the establishment of Maratha rule in Orissa in about 1750, the temple priests had to escape with the deities on several occasions for fear of fresh sacrilege. The images were sometimes buried in sand, at other times kept in mud houses and worshipped. For more than thirty years Jagannath was either absent from his seat in Puri or – during the reign of Aurangzeb – forcibly locked in his temple (Kulke 1986: 321-33).

Navakalevara Ceremony

The frequent removal of the deities from the temple, their transportation and concealment, would have severely damaged the wooden figures. That would have necessitated their frequent regeneration. It appears that in those unsettled times, the Navakalevara ceremony became a regular feature of the cult. That would have served the added purpose of emotionally healing the priests and devotees, for it assured them that the images were wooden forms of immortal Deities, and had to be renewed, every twelve years or so. On each occasion, the *Brahmapadartha* was relocated in the new images. Navakalevara, every eleven or nineteen years, was introduced after the re-instatement of the Jagannath images in 1590 (Tripathi 1986a: 229-230; Kulke 1986: 328-329).

PILGRIMAGE RESUMED

Though the Jagannath cult witnessed a restoration in the time of Akbar, things changed under his successors. In 1607, Orissa became a separate *subadari* (province), with Cuttack as its capital. From then on, its Muslim governors repeatedly tried to subdue neighbouring Khurda. In 1611, during the reign of Jahangir, the priests fled with the image to an island in Chilka Lake, where they remained for several years (Mubayi 2005: 40-41; Kulke 2013: 74). In 1623, during his revolt against his father, Prince Khurram (the future Shah Jahan) passed through Orissa. According to the *Madala Panji*, Narasimha, the new Raja of Khurda paid him homage, after which a Rajput officer of Khurram's troops, together with the Raja, reinstalled the images in the temple at Puri (Mubayi 2005: 41).

The following three decades were peaceful. The long absence of Jagannath and the non-arrival of pilgrims had been injurious to the priests, the Khurda Raja, and the Mughal Subadar at Cuttack who suffered great financial loss. Hence the Khurda Raja and the Subadar came to a tacit understanding, and pilgrimage was allowed to resume (Kulke 2013: 74-75). William Bruton, the first Englishman to provide an account of the temple, reported in November 1633 that a Mughal officer supervised the pilgrimage,

> .... This Idoll ... is carried in a stately Chariot, and the Idoll in the midd'st of it: and one of the Moguls sitting behind it in the Chariot upon a convenient place, with a Canopy, to keepe the Sunne from injuring of it, obviously to control this important annual gathering of pilgrims (Bruton 1985: 68).[3]

The implicit cooperation between the Khurda Raja, the temple priests, and the Mughal Subadars of Cuttack, continued till the reign of Aurangzeb. After his order of 1669, many temples in Orissa were destroyed, like the Sarala temple in Jhankada, and several in Jaipur. At that time, a Subadar was believed to have set out for Puri to desecrate the temple. The *Madala Panji* stated that he was forced back by a lightning flash near Pipli. His alleged campaign seemed to have been a successful bid to extort money from the Khurda Raja and the priests for overlooking activities at the temple.

FAKE DESTRUCTION ORGANIZED – REPLICA IMAGE SENT TO AURANGZEB

The 'economic toleration' prompted Aurangzeb to issue a fresh decree in 1692, explicitly ordering the destruction of the Jagannath temple. But Divyasimha Deva, the then Raja of Khurda, met the Subadar and agreed to arrange a pretended demolition under his supervision. Some minor structures were pulled down, a replica image of Jagannath sent to Aurangzeb, and the main temple gates closed. Some priests, however, entered the temple through a secret side door in the southern wall, and continued the daily rituals.

RAJAS VISIT TEMPLE SURREPTITIOUSLY

On learning of these developments, Aurangzeb recalled the Subadar and sent a high officer as examiner to Puri. But according to an Oriya chronicle, the Raja of Khurda 'won him as a friend' – with a gift of 30,000 rupies. Till Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Jagannath temple was officially closed, but the cult continued, so much so, that several rajas visited the temple and performed their customary family rituals. Some months after Aurangzeb's death, the temple doors were forcibly opened by a minister of Khurda and the chiefs of the eighteen Gadajata states (Pl. 47). That would have been impossible without the complicity of the Mughal Subadar in Cuttack (Kulke 1986: 333-334; Mubayi 2005: 42).

KHURDA RAJA CONVERTED TO ISLAM, IMAGES RELOCATED IN SAFE LOCATIONS

After Aurangzeb's death, the Nawabs of Bengal became semi-independent and appointed the Subadar of Orissa. There were no disruptions during the reign of Nawab Murshid Quli Khan. He was succeeded by his son-in-law, Shuja-uddin Muhammad Khan (r. 1727-1739), who appointed his son, Muhammad Taqi Khan as Subadar of Cuttack. Muhammad Taqi Khan was remembered as one of the cruelest Subadars, who even compelled the Raja of Khurda, Ramachandra II, to embrace Islam (McLane 1993: 174). Several times the image had to be taken to the inaccessible mountains in the south (Kulke 2013: 81).

The *Riyazu-s-Salatin* recorded, "During the commotion in Muhammad Taqi Khan's time, the Rajah of Parsutam had removed Jagannath, the Hindu God, from the limits of the Subah of Odisah, and had guarded it on the summit of a hill across the Chilka lake" (*Riyazu-s-Salatin* 1902: 302-303).

THE RETURN OF IMAGES

After Taqi Khan's death in 1734/35, the new Governor, Murshid Quli Khan II ordered the images of the Jagannath trinity be brought back. As the *Riyazu-s-Salatin* stated,

> In consequence of the removal of the idol, there was a falling-off to the tune of nine laks of rupees in the Imperial revenue, accruing from pilgrims ...Establishing friendly relations [with the new Governor, the] Rajah ... brought back Jagannath the Hindu God to Parsutam [Puri], and re-established the worship of Jagannath at Puri (*Riyazu-s-Salatin* 1902: 302-303; Kulke 1986: 334-336; Mubayi 2005: 43).

As Stirling summed up, "The religious warfare was at last set at rest by the institution of the tax on pilgrims" (Stirling 1846: 104). An outstanding pilgrim tax for four years, in addition to Rs. 18 *lakhs* imposed on the Khurda Raja took its toll, from which he never recovered (Kulke 2013: 81).

NOTES

1. From very early on, Hinduism demonstrated an astonishing ability to assimilate and integrate beliefs and cults of various sections living in the subcontinent. These became so integral to Hinduism that it became difficult to differentiate tribal and folk deities from other gods of Hinduism. The Jagannath temple at Puri enshrined the deity of the aboriginal Sabara people (Eschmann 1986: 79-97).
2. There were many legends about the twelfth century Sanskrit poet, Jayadeva (Miller 1984: 39-40). His *Gita Govinda,* which exalted Radha, was written in the precincts of the Jagannath temple. The work was regularly recited in the temple and inspired many generations of poets. Chaitanya (1486-1534) lived the last decades of his life there. The *Chaitanya-Chandrodaya* recorded his experience on first beholding the deity,

   "I rushed to embrace Jagannatha. What happened afterwards, I do not remember... In future, I shall behold Jagannatha from outside. I shall not enter the sanctum but stand near the Garuda column." Raghunatha Das, a close companion of Chaitanya, wrote of him standing near the Garuda column, "while his tall and lustrous body was drenched with the tears of his eyes, dripping due to increasing devotion, having had a sight of the Lord of Nilacala in front of him."

   The Gajapati king, Prataparudra Deva regarded Chaitanya as an avatar of Krishna. Chaitanya introduced *nagara kirtana* (street singing of devotional songs) in Orissa. Under his influence, the cult of Radha-Krishna was exalted by contemporary writers. He was believed to have breathed his last before the image of Jagannath (Mukherjee 1986: 310-317).
3. Several visitors to India in the sixteenth century wrote detailed accounts of the temple, among them Jean-Baptiste Tavernier,

"Jagannath is the name of one of the mouths of the Ganges, upon which the great pagoda is built, where the Great Brahman, that is to say the High Priest of the idolaters, resides... The great idol on the altar of the choir has two diamonds for his eyes and a pendant from his neck which reaches to the waist, and the smallest of these diamonds weighs about 40 carats; he has bracelets on his arms, some being of pearls and some of rubies, and this magnificent idol is called Kesora [Kesava Rai]...

"It is covered from the neck to the base with a grand mantle which hangs on the altar, and this mantle is of gold or silver brocade according to the nature of the ceremonies...

"There is nothing left uncovered save the hands and face; the head and body are made of sandalwood... This idol is anointed every day with scented oils which make him quite black. He has on his right hand his sister who is called Sotora [Subhadra], who is also represented standing and clothed; and on his left his brother, also clothed, who is called Balbader [Balbhadra]. In front of the great idol, somewhat to the left, his wife is to be seen, who is called Kemui [Kamini], she is of massive gold, and represented standing, the three others are made of sandalwood...

"...The revenues of this great pagoda are sufficient to feed 15,000 or 20,000 pilgrims daily, and these numbers are often to be found there, the pagoda being the object of the highest devotion by the Indians, who visit it from all quarters..." (Tavernier Book III 1889: 175-178).

Francois Bernier described the annual *rath yatra*,

"In the town of *Jagannat*, situated on the Gulf of *Bengale*, and containing the famous temple of the idol of that name, a certain annual festival is held, which continues, if my memory fail not, for the space of eight or nine days. At this festival is collected an incredible concourse of people... The number, I am told, sometimes exceeds one hundred and fifty thousand. A superb wooden machine is constructed, such as I have seen in several other parts of the *Indies* ...This machine is set on fourteen or sixteen wheels like those of a gun-carriage, and drawn or pushed along by the united exertions of fifty or sixty persons. The idol, *Jagannat*, placed conspicuously in the middle, richly attired, and gorgeously adorned, is thus conveyed from one temple to another.

"The first day on which this idol is formally exhibited in the temple, the crowd is so immense, and the press so violent, that some of the pilgrims, fatigued and worn out in consequence of their long journey, are squeezed to death: the surrounding throng give them a thousand benedictions, and consider them highly favoured to die on such a holy occasion after travelling so great a distance. And while the chariot of hellish triumph pursues its solemn march, persons are found (it is no fiction which I recount) so blindly credulous and so full of wild notions as to throw themselves upon the ground in the way of its ponderous wheels, which pass over and crush to atoms the bodies of the wretched fanatics without exciting the horror or surprise of the spectators. No deed, according to their estimation, is so heroic or meritorious as this self-devotion: the victims believe that *Jagannat* will receive them as children, and recall them to life in a state of happiness and dignity" (Bernier 1916: 304-305).

12

Attacks on the South Commence

For almost a hundred years after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, the Sultans remained preoccupied with consolidating their hold on northern India. Alauddin Khalji was the first Muslim ruler to look southward. In February 1296, in a "quasi-private enterprise" secretly planned and executed without permission of the reigning Jalal-ud-din Khalji, he attacked the Yadava kingdom of Devagiri (Sastri 1966: 227). Its ruler, Ramachandradeva (1271-1311) sued for peace after a week's siege of his capital.[1]

On becoming Sultan, Alauddin Khalji (r. 1296-1316) directed his general, Malik Kafur on a campaign of pillage and plunder to the south. Malik Kafur first secured capitulation of Ramachandradeva, whose son had withheld tribute and also given shelter to Karna Vaghela (also known as Karna II, r. 1296-1304), the refugee king of Gujarat, and his daughter who were fleeing from the Sultan's forces (Bhandarkar 1928: 90-91). The medieval historian, Ziauddin Barni described the invasion of Devagiri,

> Malik Naib Kafur reached Deogir and laid the country waste. He made Ramdeo and his sons prisoners, and took his treasures, as well as elephants. Great spoil fell into his hands ... and he returned with it triumphant to Dehli, carrying with him Ramdeo. The Sultan showed great favour to the Rai and sent him back in great honour ... to Deogir, which place he confirmed in his possession. The Rai was ever afterwards obedient, and sent his tribute regularly as long as he lived (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 200-201).

Thereafter, Malik Kafur set out for Warangal, which he reached in 1310. It was then ruled by the Kakatiya king, Prataprudradeva. Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) provided details of the siege of the double-walled city,

> The wall of Arangal was made of mud, but so strong that a spear of steel could not pierce it: and if a ball from a western catapult were to strike against it, it would rebound like a nut with which children play with.
>
> ...Orders were issued that every man should erect behind his own tent a *kath-gar*, that is a wooden defence. The trees were cut with axes and felled, notwithstanding their groans: and the Hindus, who worship trees, could not at that time come to the rescue of their idols, so that every cursed tree which was in that capital of idolatry was cut down to the roots; and clever carpenters applied the sharp iron to shape the blocks, so that a wooden fortress was drawn around the army of such stability, that if fire had rained from heaven their camp would have been unscathed...The Naib Amir gave daily orders to attack the chiefs of Laddar Deo (Prataprudradeva), and he also ordered the 'western stone-balls' to be thrown at the wall from every direction' to demolish it, and reduce it to powder (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 80-81).

On the successful conclusion of the siege,

> The Malik took the entire wealth of the Rai which was brought, and threatened a general massacre, if it should be

> found that the Rai had reserved anything for himself. An engagement was then entered into that the Rai should send *jizya* annually to Dehli. The Malik left Arangal on the 16th of Shawwal (March 1310 AD) with all his booty, and a thousand animals groaned under the weight of the treasure" (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 84, 202-203).

Kafur reached Delhi in June 1310 with a huge booty, and was received with honours by the Sultan.

SECOND ATTACK

In 1311 CE, Malik Kafur again set out for the south, this time against the Hoysala ruler, Vira Ballala III (1291-1342 CE) of Dwarasamudra, and the Pandya kingdom in the far south. He attacked the Hoysala kingdom when the ruler was away on an expedition to the Pandya country, then rent by quarrels between the sons of the deceased ruler, Maravarman Kulasekhara II (Sastri 1966: 229). Vira Ballala rushed back, but the vicious nature of the invasion forced him to propose a settlement. Malik Kafur was reported to have responded,

> ... he was sent with the object of converting him to Muhammadanism, or of making him *zimmi* (one who could enjoy the same political privileges as the Muhammadans on payment of *jiziya*) and subject to pay tax, or of slaying him, if neither of these terms were assented to (Aiyangar 1971: 93).

Vira Ballala expressed his readiness to surrender all his valuables, "except his sacred thread." Malik Kafur remained in the city for twelve days and left with immense treasures (Aiyangar 1971: 93-94). He sent Vira Ballala's young son to Delhi, along with elephants and horses, for Alauddin Khalji to personally sanction the settlement. Two inscriptions of Vira Ballala III dated 1310 CE, mentioned the Muhammadan invasion (*Epigraphia Carnatic* Vol. V, Has 51 and 52). A third recorded a grant to a temple in celebration of the return of

Prince Vira Ballala from Delhi in 1313, after the war against *'Turukas'* (*Epigraphia Carnatic* Vol. VIII Sh. 68; Aiyangar 1952: 186; Aiyangar 1971: 94).

Immediately after the departure of the Delhi army, Vira Ballala commenced work on restoration of the considerably damaged Dwarasmaudra (Halebidu). A record of his dated 1316 CE, stated that he was ruling in great happiness after having rebuilt his capital (Aiyangar 1971: 125).

Accompanied by Vira Ballala, who guided him through the difficult mountain passes, Kafur then proceeded towards Mabar. Though at odds with each other, the Pandyas united and resorted to guerrilla warfare to thwart the invader. Kafur first marched against Bir Dhul, the capital of Vira Pandya, in the neighbourhood of Uraiyur. Vira Pandya escaped to Kandur, and incessant rains hampered further operations of the northern army.

Malik Kafur then moved to Kanchipuram (Marhatpuri of Muslim historians), where he plundered temples before returning to Bir Dhul. He planned a surprise attack on the Pandya capital of Madura, where Sundara Pandya was ruling. Alerted, Sundara Pandya fled with his family and treasures. His uncle, Vikrama Pandya, brother of Maravarman Kulasekhara II, however, trounced the invader and forced him to retreat (Sastri 1966: 229-230). Abdullah Wassaf wrote that Malik Kafur, who "thought himself a very Saturn, was obliged to retreat, and bring back his army" (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 50). Kafur managed to keep the enormous wealth taken from Vira Pandya. The invasions from the north drained a vast amount of treasure from the south. Barni recorded,

> ...six hundred and twelve elephants, ninety-six thousand *mans* of gold, several boxes of jewels and pearls, and twenty thousand horses... The inhabitants of Dehli remarked that so many elephants and so much gold had never before been brought into Dehli. No one could remember anything like it,

nor was there anything like it in recorded history (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 204).

The Chera king of Travancore, Ravivarman Kulasekhara rose to prominence in south India after Malik Kafur's return to the north. According to his inscriptions found at Kanchi and Srirangam, he was born in 1266 CE, married a Pandya princess, and by 1299 CE had become supreme in Kerala. He extended his authority over the Pandya and Chola kingdoms, and crowned himself king on the banks of the Vegavati, near Kanchi in 1312. He was defeated in 1317 CE by Sundara Pandaya, who was aided by a large army sent by the Kakatiya ruler Prataprudradeva II, and compelled to retreat to his kingdom (Sastri 1966: 230-231; Srinivasan 1979: 227).

Meanwhile, Ramachandradeva died in 1312, and was succeeded by his son, Singana whose hostility to Delhi was well known. Malik Kafur was sent to annex the kingdom, which was swiftly done. However, not all parts of the south submitted. Kampili proclaimed its independence under Singaya Nayaka (a warrior from the hill country, *malnad* of Karnataka). His famous successor, Kampiladeva consolidated his rule with the assistance of Bukka and his four brothers. Kampili was located a mere twenty miles from where the Vijayanagara kingdom was later established (Stein 1990: 18-19).

There was considerable disorder in the years following Malik Kafur's return to Delhi, till Qutub-ud-din Mubarak Khalji, son of Ala-ud-din Khalji, managed to occupy the throne (r. 1316-1320). He marched to Deogir in 1318, captured the rebellious Harpal Deo (probably a son-in-law of Ramachandradeva), and "ordered him to be flayed and his skin to be hung over the gate of Deogir" (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 215).

Mubarak Khalji also sent an army under Khusrau Khan, against the Kakatiya ruler who had withheld tribute. Khusrau Khan remained in the region for a year, but intrigued against the Delhi Sultan and was recalled. Barni wrote,

> When he marched from Deogir to Mabar, he used to hold secret councils at night with some of his fellow Hindus, and with several disaffected adherents of Malik Naib Kafur, whom he had taken as friends, about making a revolt; and thus intriguing, he arrived at Mabar (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 216).

Subsequently, on return to Delhi, he murdered the Sultan and briefly occupied the throne.[2]

ADVENT OF THE TUGHALQS

In 1323, Sultan Ghiyas ud din Tughlaq (r.1320-25) sent a force to the south under his son, Ulugh Khan (the future Muhammad bin Tughlaq). Ulugh Khan attacked Warangal, but was unsuccessful in the first attack. Prataprudradeva shut himself and his forces in the strongly fortified capital city. The siege lasted six months, and led to dissensions in the camp of the invader.

Prataprudra was elated with his success but Ghiyasuddin sent reinforcements, and Ulugh Khan marched against the Kakatiya kingdom a second time. Prataprudra held out for five months, but the outbreak of famine compelled him to surrender (1323). Amir Khusrau, in his *Nuh Sipihr*, wrote that Prataprudra made a lengthy speech, in the course of which he said,

> The relation between Turk and Hindu is that of a lion and antelope, and the Turks whenever they please, can seize, buy, or sell any Hindu.

Amir Khusrau continued,

> The rai then ascended the rampart of the fort of Arangal, and turning his face towards the royal pavilion, he bowed to the earth. Thus did he for three days, out of respect to the pale of religion; he turned towards the pavilion, and kissed the earth... (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 561).

Ulugh Khan destroyed the great Svayambhusiva temple, whose fragments remain scattered around Warangal's fort area. He built an enormous mosque on the site of the temple, along with a huge audience hall. There remained the question of what to do with the defeated king. The Delhi army thought it unwise to execute Prataprudra, given his standing among the Andhra people. As he had repeatedly rebelled against the Sultan, it was decided to send him to Delhi. However, he never reached the imperial capital. A Telugu inscription, dated seven years after the incident, claimed that he died on the banks of the Narmada. A subsequent epigraph, dated 1423, stated that he died by his own wish. It seemed likely that Prataprudra committed suicide on the banks of the Narmada, while being taken to Delhi (Eaton 2008: 20-21).

An imagined account of the prolonged encounter with the Delhi armies was provided in the *Prataparudra Charitra*, composed in the sixteenth century. It inverted the Kakatiya ruler's defeat and death and claimed that Prataparudra reached the imperial capital. There he was released by the Sultan, whose mother saw them both as manifestations of Hari and Hara – *"Sultanu talli 'miriddaru Hari Hara svarupulu' ani vachinchuta"* (*Prataparudra Charitra* 2017: 75-87). Ulugh Khan then proceeded towards Jajnagar, in the Ganga kingdom of Orissa, in an attempt to secure the Warangal frontier from that direction (Aiyangar 1971: 134).

By the time Ulugh Khan ascended the throne, considerable parts of the Deccan and south India had acknowledged the suzerainty of Delhi. Devagiri and Warangal were under direct control, while a governor was consolidating Delhi's hold over Mabar. Kampili and Dwarasamudra remained outside the authority of the Sultanate (Sastri 1966: 233).[3]

GROWING RESISTANCE TO DELHI

However, resistance to Delhi grew. Kampiladeva, the ruler of Kampili, even provided shelter to Muhammad bin Tughlaq's rebellious cousin, Baha-ud-din Garshasp, governor of Sagar in the neighbourhood of Gulbarga. The Sultan himself led the campaign against Kampili in 1327. Kampiladeva fought bravely, but the odds were against him. He asked the women of his household to immolate themselves to avoid falling into enemy hands, which they did (Sastri 1966: 234-236).

Muhammad bin Tughlaq remained in Devagiri for sometime to oversee arrangements for the transfer of his capital to that city. In 1327, the Delhi armies again sacked Dwarasamudra. Vira Ballala shifted his court to Tiruvannamalai in the northern Tamil country. He was also said to have established a fortified city on the Tungabhadra River across from Anegondi, that was to later become Vijayanagara. It was then called Virupakshapattana (the city under the protection of Shiva as god Virupaksha, whose shrine was located there), and was intended to ward off further Muslim incursions into southern Karnataka. According to some historians, Bukka and Harihara were appointed to govern the new city (Stein 1990: 19-20).

The hold of Muhammad bin Tughlaq on the south was never secure, and attempts to liberate the region began soon after he left for the north, in 1329 CE. Though he managed to retain Sultanpur (the former Warangal) till 1335, the Tughlaqs were unable to consolidate their authority in Andhra. Their control was tenuous even in Sultanpur's immediate hinterland, where a number of chieftains seized effective power. Prolaya Nayaka and his cousin Kapaya Nayaka (chieftains of the erstwhile Warangal rulers), assisted by seventy-five lesser Nayakas, founded the Reddi kingdom of Addanki and Kondavidu. In his Vilasa grant, dated sometime between 1325 and 1350, Prolaya Nayaka, after lamenting the devastation the Turks had brought to Andhra, proclaimed himself the restorer of *dharma* (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XXXII 1987: 241).

MABAR SULTANATE
(SULTANATE OF MADURAI – 1334-1378)

From 1324 to 1334, Delhi exercised direct control over Mabar. Muhammad bin Tughluq appointed Jalal ad-Din Ahsan Shah military governor of Mabar (which had been occupied in 1311). However, in 1335, Jalal ad-Din Ahsan Shah rebelled against Delhi, and founded an independent Sultanate at Madurai. He claimed to be the master of the entire Mabar region. But his hold seemed to have been confined to the Pandya territory, and a part of that of the Cholas.

Ibn Battuta, who visited Madurai in 1342 CE, left a vivid account of the first decade of the Madurai Sultanate. He stated that Jalal-ud-din Ahsan Shah (whose daughter Ibn Battuta married) was assassinated in 1340 CE, after a rule of five years. The throne was then occupied by a succession of generals, after whom Ghiyas-ud-din Damaghani became Sultan. Ibn Battuta visited Madurai during his reign.

Around that time, the Hoysala ruler Vira Ballala III, then about eighty years-old, defeated the Muslims near Kobban and forced them to retreat to Madurai. Eventually, Ghiyas-ud-din Damaghani made a surprise attack on Vira Ballala, took him prisoner and put him to a cruel death in 1342 CE. Ibn Battuta wrote,

> His skin was then filled with straw and hung up on the wall of Madura where I saw it suspended (Ibn Battuta 1953: 229).

Ibn Battuta's account was confirmed by an inscription of 1342 which recorded that Vira Ballala was killed in the *Turuka* war in Ciracirapalli [Trichinopoly] (*Epigraphia Carnatic* Vol. VI. kd. No.75). A severe epidemic then gripped Madurai, to which Ghiyas-ud-din Damaghani succumbed. He was succeeded by his nephew; Ibn Battuta left Mabar soon after.

Meanwhile, a descendant of the Chalukyas, Somadeva led Hindus of the western Telugu country against their Muslim overlord. In the face of widespread revolt, Muhammad bin Tughlaq sent the brothers Harihara and Bukka to govern the province after taking pledges of loyalty from them. They had been taken prisoners to Delhi when Kampili fell, and converted to Islam. What happened on their arrival was uncertain, but the common belief was that they returned to their native faith and founded the kingdom of Vijayanagara in 1336 (Stein 1990: 19-29; Wagoner 2002: 301-304).

The credit for that momentous event was traditionally attributed to the sage Vidyaranya (Madhava), eldest son of Mayana and Srimati. His brother Sayana was the great commentator on the Vedas; while another sibling, Bhoganatha, was the "*narmasachiva*" of the Vijayanagara king, Sangama II. The three brothers were disciples of the Sringeri *Matha*. Vidyaranya played a pivotal role in the ascendancy of the Sangama brothers after the death of the last Hoysala king. He was also for sometime, a minister of Harihara I. In 1346, Harihara I gave gifts to the Sringeri *Matha* in celebration of his "*vijayotsava*", victory. According to some inscriptions, Vidyaranya became head of the Sringeri *Matha* in 1374. He passed away in 1385 (Filliozat 1977: 4).

In the reign of Bukka I, his son prince Kampana Udaiyar, conquered the Sambhuvarayas region of Rajagambhira, and extended the authority of Vijayanagara over Tundira (Tondai Mandalam). Rajagambhira was a surname of the Pandya king, Jatavarman Kulasekhara. Hence "the kingdom of Rajagambhir" denoted the Pandya kingdom, and confirmed that Kampana expelled the Muhammadans from Madura (Natarajan 1994: 109).

MADHURA VIJAYA

Ganga Devi, wife of prince Kampana, composed the *Madhura Vijaya* that narrated his campaigns, particularly the conquest of Madura after defeating its Muhammadan ruler. Ganga Devi recounted how Kampana was visited by a strange lady (perhaps goddess Minakshi in disguise), who pleaded with him to liberate the south from the Madurai Sultanate,

> One day, a strange woman appeared before king Kampana and complained in the following strain about the occupation of the south by Turushkas, and its evil effects. "O King! The place known as Vyaghrapuri (Chidambaram, Perumparrapuliyar) has become truly so, for tigers inhabit it now where man dowlt once; the vimana (dome of the central shrine) of Srirangam is so dilapidated that now it is the hood of Adisesha alone that is protecting the image of Ranganatha from the falling debris. The Lord of Gajaranya (Tiruvanaikka, Jambu-kesvaram near Srirangam), who once killed an elephant to obtain its skin for his garment, has now again been reduced to the same condition, because he has been stripped bare of all clothing; while the garbhagriha (central shrine) of many another temple is crumbling, its mandapas overgrown with vegetation and its ponderous wooden doors eaten up by white ants. In the temples which once resounded with the joyous mridanga (a kind of drum), there is heard at present only the jackals that have made them their abode. The river Kaveri, that was curbed by proper dams and flowed in regular channels, has begun to breach in all directions. In the agraharas where the smoke was seen to curl up from the fire-offerings (yagadhuma), we have now the offensive-smelling smoke issuing from the roasting of flesh by the Muhammadans, and the sonorous chant of the Vedas has been replaced by the harsh voice of these ruffians. The beautiful coconut trees which once graced the gardens surrounding the city of Madura, have been cut down by these intruders, and in place of these, we have gruesome substitutes in the form of iron sula, which are adorned with garlands of decapitated human heads strung

> together. The water of the river Tamraparni, which used to be rendered white by the sandal paste rubbed away from the breasts of youthful maidens at their bath, is now flowing red with the blood of cows slaughtered by these great sinners" (*Madhura Vijaya* 1924: 5-6).
>
> Thus did the strange lady describe to Kampana, the fate that had overtaken the fair south, and drawing from her girdle a resplendent sword, addressed the king once again as follows: "O Sovereign! Once upon a time the divine Visvakarma, gathering the splinters from the weapons of all the Devas and smelting them together, shaped this strange sword and presented it to Paramesvara for gaining victory over the daityas. By performing a severe penance, one of the early Pandya kings obtained it from Lord Paramesvara. With the help of this divine weapon the descendants of this race continued to rule the kingdom prosperously for a very long period; but by a misfortune the princes of the Pandya dynasty lost the virility of their sires. Agastya, having secured this remarkable sword, presents this now to you. Just as Krishna slew Kamsa in Mathura in olden times, O King! do you also proceed now to the southern Madhura and slaughter the Mussalman king, the enemy of the world, and set up several pillars of victory on the bridge of Rama (between the mainland and the island of Ramesvaram). During your administration of the south, you should also build a strong dam across the Kaveri, and make her flow in a manner useful to the agricultural population" (*Madhura Vijaya* 1924: 6-7).

IBN BATTUTA VALIDATES MADHURA VIJAYA

Ibn Battuta confirmed Gangadevi's account of conditions in Madurai. He wrote that the Sultan of Madurai made Hindu prisoners carry posts on which they were later impaled,

> The country through which we were to pass was an uninterrupted and impassable jungle of trees and reeds. The sultan gave orders that every man in the army, great

> and small alike, should carry a hatchet to cut it down, and when the camp was struck, he rode forward with his troops and they cut down those trees from morning to noon. Food was then bought, and the whole army ate in relays, afterwards returning to their tree-felling until the evening. All the infidels whom they found in the jungle were taken prisoner, and brought to the camp with their wives and children. Their practice is to fortify their camp with a wooden palisade, which has four gates. Outside the palisade there are platforms about three feet high on which they light a fire at night. By the fire there is posted a night guard of slaves and footsoldiers, each of whom carries a bundle of thin canes. If a party of infidels should attempt to attack the camp by night each sentry lights the bundle he has in his hand, so that the night becomes as bright as the day, and the horsemen ride out in pursuit of the infidels. In the morning the infidels whom our troops had captured the previous day were divided into four groups and impaled at the four gates of the camp. Their women and little children were butchered also and the women tied by their hair to the pales. Thereafter the camp was struck and set to work cutting down another patch of jungle, and all those who were taken prisoner were treated the same way. This [slaughtering of women and children] is a dastardly practice, which I have never known of any [other] king, and it was because of it that God brought him to a speedy end (Ibn Batutta 2007: 263).

NOTES

1. Over the years, merchants and traders from Arabia had settled along the west coast. Some Arabs had accepted service under the Rashtrakutas. They were permitted to practise their religion openly and build masjids for their use (Altekar 1934: 276-277). Abu Ishtak Al Ishtakhri and Ibn Haukal stated that the Rashtrakuta rulers were very partial towards Muslims (Altekar 1934: 187). It was from such people that Alauddin Khalji gathered vital information for his raid. The traditional view that the Yadavas were surprised by Ala-ud-din's attack

has been questioned. The Purushottamapuri copper plates of Ramachandra, dated Saka 1232, i.e. 1310 CE recorded his successes against several kings of northern India, chiefly the ruler of Kanyakubja. It also claimed that he had freed Varanasi from the Mlechhas and constructed a "golden" temple to Sarangadhara (Mate and Pathy 1992: 14).

2. Khusrau Khan, who belonged to the Parwari caste, had converted to Islam. However, in 1320, he abandoned his adopted faith, murdered his sovereign, Mubarak Khalji and briefly ascended the throne. According to Barni, there was rejoicing among the Hindu population that Delhi had once again come under Hindu control (Ahmad 1964: 95-96).
3. Among the early inscriptions so far available on the Muslim invasions is No. 434 of 1903 of the Madras Epigraphist's collection, dated 1335-36 CE, from Tiruvamattur, South Arcot district. It mentioned the Muhammadan invasions in "previous days." The next reference was in the records of Tiruppattur (Ramnad district). They stated that Tiruppattur temple was in the occupation of the Muhammadans during their campaign in the south, and was re-consecrated by a certain Visaiyalaya Devan in the years 44 and 46 of Vira Pandya. Inscription c. 64 of 1916 at Titukalakkudi referred to the invasion and occupation by Muhammadans, the appropriation of temple lands, and the neglect of temple worship, till Kampana ended Muhammadan domination and appointed officers (Nayakanmars) for supervision of temple worship and management. That record has been dated 1358 CE (Aiyangar 1971: 116-118).

13

Plight of Temples and Deities

SRIRANGANATHA TEMPLE

The Sriranganatha temple, ranked foremost of 108 Vaishnava shrines, was among the first to be attacked by the Delhi armies. Sriranganatha was celebrated by votees as the *koil* – the temple *par excellence*. The temple ronicle, the *Koil Olugu* mentioned Kili Cola, the first historical rson who ruled from Uraiyur, as the builder of the shrine.[1]

The temple was a centre of the Vaishnava movement. All var saints, except Madurakavi, extolled the shrine in their mpositions. Madurakavi, whose sole work was in honour his *acharya* Nammalvar, was also associated with the temple rough his Guru. The poems of the Alvars, mostly dated to e eighth century CE, provided interesting details about the nple. Kulasekhara Alvar described the image of the reclining nganatha (*Periya Perumal*) in the sanctum sanctorum, orned with flowers and garlands. That suggested worship priests attached to the temple in his life time (Hari Rao 76: 16-47). The earliest Chola inscription in the shrine dated the seventeenth year of Parantaka I (907-955).

ATTACK ON TEMPLE

Srirangam was twice attacked by armies from the north, first in 1311 CE by Malik Kafur, and second in 1323 CE by Ulugh Khan (Pl. 48). The Pandyas ruled the region at the time of the first attack, and several of their inscriptions were found in the temple. Malik Kafur reached the frontiers of the Tamil country (the Mabar of Muslim historians) on 15th March 1311, but could not triumph over the Pandyas who resorted to guerrilla warfare.

Amir Khusrau mentioned a golden temple at Marhatpuri (Brahmastpuri) that Malik Kafur sacked during one night. He wrote that while Malik Kafur was at Kandur,

> ...he heard that in Brahmastpuri there was a golden idol, round which many elephants were stabled. The Malik started on a night expedition against this place, and in the morning seized no less than two hundred and fifty elephants. He then determined on razing the beautiful temple to the ground, - you might say that it was the Paradise of Shaddad, which, after being lost, those hellites had found, and that it was the golden Lanka of Ram, – the roof was covered with rubies and emeralds, – in short, it was the holy place of the Hindus, which the Malik dug up from its foundations with the greatest care, and the heads of the Brahmans and idolaters danced from their necks and fell to the ground at their feet, and blood flowed in torrents. 'The stone idols called Ling Mahadeo, which had been a long time established at that place, these, up to this time, the kick of the horse of Islam had not attempted to break. The Musulmans destroyed all the lings, and Deo Narain fell down, and the other gods who had fixed their seats there raised their feet, and jumped so high, that at one leap they reached the fort of Lanka, and in that affright the lings themselves would have fled had they had any legs to stand on.

According to Amir Khusrau,

> Much gold and valuable jewels fell into the hands of the Musulmans, who returned to the royal canopy, after executing their holy project, on the 13th of Zi-l ka'da, 710 H. (April 1311 AD). They destroyed all the temples at Birdhul, and placed the plunder in the public treasury (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 90-91).

Some historians associated Brahmastpuri with hidambaram, long celebrated for its gilded roofs. According them Brahmastpuri was a modified form of Brahmapuri, e sacerdotal (*agamic*) name given to Chidambaram in Shaiva terature (Aiyangar 1971: 108-109). However, Professor Hari ao, among others, identified the golden temple as riranganatha and the Shiva temple as Jambukesvaram, near rirangam (Hari Rao 1976: 89-92; Srinivasan 1979: 226).

According to the *Koil Olugu,* at the time of both attacks, lagiyamanavalan, the procession image of Ranganatha was emoved from the temple. Describing the first attack it stated, Dillisvaran (the king of Delhi), having defeated Prataparudra battle, invaded Tondaimandalam and Solamandalam." The onquering army entered the temple through the northern ateway, then in charge of *Arya Bhattas,* northern Brahmins. hey were easily overpowered, the temple riches seized, and everal images, including those of Alagiyamanavalan and erakulavalli, carted away (Hari Rao 1976: 92).

HE STORY OF PINCHENRAVALLI, SHE WHO FOLLOWED"

fascinating story was skilfully woven around the loss and ecovery of the Alagiyamanavalan image (Hari Rao 1976: 92-4). According to that account, a woman devotee Pinchenravalli, "she who followed"), a native of Karambanur, ear Srirangam, who took food daily only after worshipping he deity, followed the Sultanate army in the guise of a endicant. On reaching the imperial capital, she stealthily ntered the Sultan's palace and found that all the images had been locked in a hall. A young princess of the Sultan's family, struck by the beauty of the Ranganatha icon, had taken it as her plaything. The woman devotee rushed back to Srirangam and informed the people of the situation. The *Stalattar* (chief temple officer) closed the north gate of the temple, buried the image of Sriranga Nacciyar under the *bilva* tree near her shrine, and followed the woman to Delhi.

There they pleased the Sultan with their songs and dance and in recompense asked for the return of their deity. "Our Perumal is in the possession of your daughter," they said. Thereupon the Sultan replied, "Call back your god if you can." The god was then invoked and he appeared; the startled ruler permitted the devotees to take back their deity. They immediately hurried back home with the image.

On learning of that happening, the Sultani (princess) urged the king to send an army to repossess the icon. Accordingly, a royal army left Delhi three days later. The fleeing temple servants learnt they were being followed when they neared Chandragiri. They immediately dispersed, and three of them, who were of a class of temple servants called *Kodavar* (and who were related as uncle, brother-in-law, and nephew), were entrusted with the image. They climbed the slopes of Vengadam hills, and hid the image in the forest. The imperial army reached Srirangam and found the temple shut. They were informed the deity had not yet returned from Delhi. The princess was said to have died of grief at Srirangam (Hari Rao 1976: 92-93).

The *Koil Olugu* stated that on the way back to Delhi the Muslim armies,

> ...reached Tirupati and heard that the Perumal had gone up the hills. From the foot of the hills they deputed many men to make an extensive search for the Perumal. Not finding a secret place, in that region, where they could safely keep the Perumal concealed, the Kodavar thought of a plan. Placing his brother-in-law and nephew on the top of the hill, the

> uncle tied himself to the Perumal with the help of roots and herbs and asked the two on the top to let him down into a declivity by means of a creeper fastened to a promontory of the mountain, jutting out like the hood of a serpent. In course of time his body perished ...The brother-in-law and the nephew got down the slope with the help of plants and creepers, worshipped the Perumal, cremated the body of the dead uncle, and remained unknown on the slopes to the north of Alarmelmangaipuram (Mangapuram, near Chandragiri). The brother-in-law too died, in course of time. The nephew, however, remained unseen, with the Perumal, for a long time, living on roots and fruits (*Koil Olugu*: 27-28).

CIDENT REMEMBERED IN FOLKLORE

ofessor Hari Rao viewed the account of the first restoration
cluding the stories of Pinchenravalli, the Kodavar, and the
incess from Delhi) as unhistorical. "They all belonged to
e realm of folklore and mythology" (Hari Rao 1976: 105).

Meanwhile, the Stalattar, weary of waiting for the return
Perumal, consecrated fresh images and resumed worship.
new image of Sriranga Nacciyar was also sanctified as the
iginal image that had been buried under the *bilva* tree could
t be located (Hari Rao 1976: 94).

The *Koil Olugu* stated that the exile of Perumal lasted "fifty-
ne-and-a-half years, of which two years were spent in the
lace of the Sultan" (*Koil Olugu*: 28-29). Towards the end of
at period, two *Irulas* (hunters) found the nephew, then an
d man of eighty. He requested them to prepare for the return
the image to Srirangam. The chieftain of neighbouring
handragiri assisted the aged *Kodavar* in reaching Srirangam.

However, the people at Srirangam had forgotten the
uslim invasion and the exile of the original image. The
fortunate *Kodavar*, who had spent fifty-eight years protecting
e image, was denied entry to the temple. Inexplicably, the
own of the image of Sriranga Nacciyar began to emerge
om beneath the *bilva* tree, with the arrival of the *Kodavar* and
erumal.

A search began for someone who could help unravel the truth. It led to a 93 year-old blind washerman, who had washed the clothes of the original Perumal for over half a century. He could identify the image by the smell of the water. He took the *Iravadai tirtam* (wet cloth, *tirtham*) of both images and exclaimed in joy, "It is He, Our Perumal (*Nam Perumal*) Alagiyamanavalan!" The original images of Perumal and Nacciyar were thus reinstated. A shrine was also erected for the Sultani, who had demonstrated great devotion to Perumal. Her image was painted on a wall and consecrated; provisions were made for food offerings suitable for a Muslim princess, who became a Hindu deity, Bibi Nacciyar or Sandu Nacciyar (Sultani Nacciyar) (Hari Rao 1976: 94-95; Aiyangar 1971: 160-161).

There was no epigraphic evidence of the Bibi Nacciyar shrine, nor any information on when it was constructed. The *Koil Olugu* ended its account of the incident stating that all details had been inscribed on the Sandu Nacciyar shrine, but were destroyed when the Citra *mandapa* was reconstructed (Hari Rao 1976: 96).

'HEALING MYTHS'

Though the historicity of the entire episode was doubtful, what was notable was the participation of a wide section of society in the defence of the Alagiyamanavalan image. While claiming that the procession images survived both attacks, the *Koil Olugu* admitted that on the first occasion Muslims made off with all the temple riches, but provided no details (*Koil Olugu*: 25, 148-149, 157). To recount the act of desecration would have been distressing, so the incredible story of the women devotee was narrated in considerable detail, to bolster the faith of devotees.

Some scholars described these stories as "healing myths," and maintained that the raid from the north was "made the occasion for a triumphant demonstration of piety, righteousness, and the god's divine powers" (Spencer 1978: 21-22). The harsh reality was that in the first attack, the invaders took away the icon, which was not heard of again.

NO WORSHIP IN TEMPLE TILL 1371

The *Koil Olugu* implied as much, when it stated that after the divine image failed to manifest itself, a new image was cast and used in its place (*Koil Olugu*: 28). It called the image *Tiruvaranga-maligaiyar – God of the Srirangam temple.* However, even that image was forced to leave the temple in 1323, and there was no worship till 1371 (Hari Rao 1976: 96-97).

B. Lewis Rice (1837-1927), first Director of the Mysore State Archaeology Department and author of the highly acclaimed *Mysore Gazetteer*, recorded the story of the Ramapriya image allegedly taken to Delhi and brought back by Ramanuja (Rice Vol. II 1897: 272-273). Two classes of Holeyas or outcastes, Tirukula and Jambavakula, were credited with having assisted Ramanuja in regaining the image from Delhi. Hence, they were conferred the privilege of entering the temple once a year to "pay their devotions" (Rice Vol. II 1897: 272-273).

Professor Nagaswamy regarded that account highly unlikely. He pointed out that Malik Kafur's invasion occurred in the early fourteenth century, when Ramanuja was no more (his widely accepted dates being 1017-1137 CE) (Nagaswamy 2008: 7).

SECOND ATTACK ON SRIRANGAM

A second attack on the temple occurred in 1323, after Ulugh Khan had defeated Prataparudra of Warangal. According to the *Koil Olugu*, the image of the reclining Ranganatha in the sanctum was blocked with stones and saved from desecration. But many pillared halls in the temple enclosure were destroyed. The gold staff of Vishnu was smashed, the northern face of the Nammalvar shrine reduced to rubble, as was the Dhanvantri shrine (*Koil Olugu*: 152, 156). The embankments around the island were also ruined.

FATE OF PROCESSIONAL IMAGE

The account of the processional deity seemed less improbable the second time. It corroborated that the saga of Pinchenravalli of the first invasion was "a fanciful projection into the earlier years of the authentic restoration which followed the second raid" (Spencer 1978: 23).

TEMPLE UNDER MUSLIM OCCUPATION

According to the *Koil Olugu*, during the second attack the Muslim chief converted the Alagiyamanavalan *tirumantapa*, opposite the sanctum sanctorum, into his residence. The shrine escaped complete annihilation due to a temple courtesan, who ensnared the Muslim general. Due to her wiles, he confined himself to defacement of cornices of the various *gopuras* and *mantapas*, and a few images like the Dwarapalas around the central shrine. He was troubled with poor health during his stay in the temple, and finally left for Kannanur. There he pulled down the walls of Poysalesvara Udaiyanar temple, and constructed a fortress for himself. The temple was turned into a mosque.[2]

Singappiran, a Brahmin official of the temple, befriended the Muslim general through the courtesan, and protected the temple precincts as long as possible. Since both the original and substitute procession images were missing, regular worship practically ceased. The priests did their utmost to attend to the image of Ranganatha hidden in the sanctum, but were constantly harassed by Muslims, who swarmed the temple (Hari Rao 1976: 107-108).

Namburi Kesavacharya, in his Telugu work *Acharyasukti Muktavali*, related the contribution of the temple courtesan in defending the shrine (Aiyangar 1919: 40-41). According to that account, the courtesan by a ruse took the general up a *gopura* on the pretext of showing him the image of Paravasudeva (on the main *vimana*), and pushed him down. That killed him. Fearing the consequences of her action, she also threw herself down, but did not die. The *Koil Olugu* recorded,

> Later on, when the other Muslim armies had fled, the *parijanas* (attendants) opened the doors of the temple and found life still lingering in the body of the *dasi*. Immediately they all went to the Perumal and appealed to Him. Through the instrumentality of an *arcaka* the Perumal came to her and, with great satisfaction, asked her what boon she wanted. She replied, "whenever any of my creed dies the fire for cremation should be fetched from the temple kitchen, and to them must be offered a certain quantity of rice from the store-house, and also *tirtham*, garland and *parivattam*." Accordingly from that day her requests are being fulfilled (*Koil Olugu*: 128-129, 134-135).

Professor Hari Rao viewed the tale of the courtesan, like that of Sultani or Bibi Nacciyar, as an endeavour to conceal a mortifying situation (Hari Rao 1976: 107-108).

OTHER ACCOUNTS OF MUSLIM OCCUPATION

Among other works that detailed the Muslim occupation of the temple were the *Guruparamparai*, and Anantarya's *Prapannamrtam*. According to the *Prapannamrtam*, the processional image of Ranganatha, Alagiyamanavalan had been taken for a festival to the banks of the Coleroon River, a short distance from the Srirangam temple. A messenger arrived there and informed Pillai Lokacharya (head of the Udayavar Math) that a fierce *yavana* was marching with troops towards Srirangam, destroying temples and Brahmin villages en route. The people, unsure of what to do as they were in the midst of a festival, decided to draw lots before the Lord to determine whether they should stay or leave. The results of the draw favoured staying. So the festival continued. Soon, another messenger brought news that Muslims had reached Kannanur and were heading towards Srirangam (Aiyangar 1919: 34).

Pillai Lokacharya then consulted Vedanta Desika, the renowned Vaishnava *acharya*. As per his decision, the images of Alagiyamanavalan and his Consort were sent in a southern direction, under the supervision of Pillai Lokacarya and a few *parijanas*. Vedanta Desika himself rushed to Srirangam, and sent out the image of Sriranga Nacciyar and some boxes of treasures and jewels with a few followers, probably to follow the first group. He then locked the doors of the sanctum, barricaded the entrance to the main shrines with stones, placed substitute images in the *mantapas* opposite, and proceeded to the shrine of Panviyavlan [two *mula beras* (main images) were found in the Nacciyar shrine, one of them possibly the image that had been walled up during the raid].

By then, the invaders had arrived at the temple and desecrated the shrine. The *Koil Olugu* recorded that 12,000 ascetics were killed, and referred to the incident as *Panriyalvan-tirumottu mahakalaham* (the invasion of Panriyalvan Tirumedu) and *Pannirayiramtirumudi-tiruttina-kalabham* (the invasion which took 12,000 heads) (Hari Rao 1976: 103).

Vedanta Desika managed to escape from Srirangam with the two young sons of Sudarsana Bhatta, author of *Srutaprakasika*, and a single manuscript of his famous commentary on Ramanuja's *Sribhasya*. With those, he reached Yadavadri (Melkote in Mysore territory).

THE WANDERINGS OF RANGANATHA

The *Koil Olugu* and other works provided details of the wanderings of Ranganatha. The image criss-crossed almost the entire south India, in a bid to avoid areas teeming with the invaders. Leaving Srirangam, the fugitives proceeded southward through the former Pudukottah state and reached Gostipura or Tirukkottiyur, in Ramnad district. From there, they moved further south to Jyotiskudi (Jyoti-smatipura or Kalaiyarkoil in the same district) (Aiyangar 1952: 215-216; Aiyangar 1971: 159). All the jewels of the deity and Lokacarya's belongings were taken away by robbers. Lokacarya was said to have died at Jyotiskudi, distraught at news from Srirangam.

Leaving Jyotiskudi, the group turned west and reached the famous Vaishnava shrine of Alagarkoil (Tirumalirumsolai), twelve miles north of Madurai, where they kept the image for a year. From Alagarkoil, they moved in a north-western direction until they arrived at Kolikodu (Calicut). There, they encountered many other exiles with images from numerous temples of south India. Among them was the image of Nammalvar from Tirunagari, which the group carrying Alagiyamanavalan took under their protection. After a year's stay in Calicut, they travelled to Tirukkinambi, an important Vaishnava shrine in Gundlupet taluk, in the extreme south of Mysore state. There the image of Nammalvar was instated in a local temple. After some days, the Srirangam group moved through jungles to avoid capture. Eventually they reached Punganur in Chittoor district, bordering Mysore state. But danger pushed them back into Mysore country. For a considerable period, they stayed in the temple of Tirunarayanapuram or Melukote (Seringapatam tq.). Then, in a daring effort, they rushed across to Tirupati. There, the image was kept in safety in the Venkateshwara temple (Aiyangar 1919: 35-36; Hari Rao 1976: 104-105).

RANGANATHA RETURNS TO HIS ABODE

Meanwhile, due to the intervention of the sage Vidyaranya, the Vijayanagara kingdom was established. Its king, Harihara II, re-conquered Tondai-mandalam. One of his officers, Gopana-Udaiyar, who resided at Senji, took the Alagiyamanavalan image from Tirupati to Singapuram (near Senji), where it was duly worshipped, and eventually reinstated in the Sriranganatha temple.[3]

THE RANGANATHA INSCRIPTION

A Sanskrit inscription (No. 287, dated 1373 CE) in Grantha characters on the western wall of the temple, recorded restoration of the image by Gopana. The inscription contained a verse composed by Vedanta Desikar. The resumption of worship in the temple, "released the suppressed spirit of the people" (*South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. XXIV: 1982: xiv-xv). The inscription stated,

> Hail! Prosperity! In the Saka year (*expressed by the chronogram*) bandhupriya (i.e. Saka-Samvat 1293).
>
> (Verse 1.) Having brought (*the god*) from the Anjanadri (*mountain; Tirupati*), the splendour of whose darkish peaks gives delight to the world, having worshipped (*him*) at Chenchi (Senji, Gingee) for some time, then having slain the Tulushkas whose bows were raised, – Goppanarya, the mirror of fame, placing Ranganatha together with both Lakshmi and the Earth in his own town (i.e. Srirangam), again duly performed excellent worship.
>
> (Verse 2.) Having carried Rangaraja, the lord of the world, from the slope of the Vrishabhagiri (*mountain; Tirupati*) to his capital (i.e. Chenchi), having slain by his army the proud Taulushka soldiers, having made the site of Sriranga united with the golden age (*Kritayuga*), and having placed there this (*god*) together with Lakshmi and the Earth, – the Brahmana Gopana duly performs, like the lotus-born (Brahma), the worship which has to be practised (*Epigraphia Indica* 1981 Vol. VI: 330).
>
> Gopana-Udaiyar gifted fifty-two villages to the temple, and Harihara II and his son, performed the *tulapurusha* ceremony (*Epigraphia Indica* 1981 Vol. VI: 322-325).

ATTACK BY TIPU SULTAN

Lewis Rice recorded a subsequent attack on the temple "... the ancient temple of Ranganatha. (was) much out of repair." The town was twice burnt or laid waste by Tipu Sultan to prevent it being used by the British army on its march to Seringapatam (Rice Vol. II 1897: 78-79).

THE MINAKSHI TEMPLE – MADURAI

Madurai, ranked among the oldest cities in south India, had an unbroken history going back to prehistoric times. Several legends were associated with the city. According to the *sthala puranas,* when sage Agastya was at Banaras, the *rishis* requested him to relate the sixty-four *lilas* of Shiva (Sundaresvara) on the banks of the Vegavati (Vaigai) river. Agastya then lauded the glories of Madurai. In popular lore, the word Madurai was the Tamil form of Mathura, the holy city on the Jumna in northern India. The name could also have derived from the Tamil word *madhuram,* meaning sweetness.

Madurai and the Pandyas were mentioned in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In the *Ramayana,* Sugriva directed his followers to search for Sita south of the Vindhyas, and to especially look out for "*Kavatam Pandyanam,*" the golden gates of the Pandyas festooned with pearls and gold, on the shores of the ocean. Kavatapuram, later known as Korkai, was believed to have subsequently sunk into the sea (Devakunjari 1979: 21-26).

The *Mahabharata* also contained several references to the Pandyas. A Pandyan king was credited with partaking in the Bharata war. That belief was current even in the tenth century CE; the Pandyan Larger Sinnamanur plates recorded that Agastya was the family preceptor of the Pandyas, and they lead the elephants in the Great War (*South Indian Inscriptions* Part IV; Sastri 1929: 23).

The Pandyas ruled continuously from Madurai from the early CE to the fourteenth century. Even after their rule ended, Madurai remained the political capital for another four centuries, thus enjoying the distinction of being the political capital for over eighteen centuries.

The Minakshi temple at Madurai ranked among the holiest of Shiva shrines.[4] An entire *purana,* the *Halasya Mahatmya* in Sanskrit, was devoted to the temple. Based on that work, Paranjoti Munivar wrote the *Tiruvilaiyadar Puranam* in about the ninth century CE. He narrated thirty *lilas* of Sundaresvara, but mentioned all the sixty-four centred around the temple and its environs. The *Tiruvilaiyadar Puranam* stated that the Indra Vimana of the temple was built on orders of Indra, who had discovered the Swayambhu *linga* in the Kadamba forest, and installed it there (Devakunjari 1979: 21-29).

Legend has it that Shiva as Sundaresvara married Minakshi, daughter of a Pandya king, and ruled the kingdom, a divine sovereignty unique to Madurai. Madurai city was designed in the shape of a coiled serpent (*Halasya* in Sanskrit and *Alavoi* in Tamil), believed to have been suggested to the king by Sundaresvara himself (Ayyar 1993: 477).

The *Sritala* manuscripts, which appeared to be some kind of log books, were a primary source of information on the temple. They were carefully maintained, re-copied, and regularly updated. The *Maduraittalavaralaru* that was published as a prose introduction to the *Madurai Tiruppanimalai*, and the *Madurai Sthanikar Varalaru* seemed to have originally formed part of *Sritala*. They were reliable accounts and their chronology often closely approximated the dates found in inscriptions of the period (Devakunjari 1979: 5-7).

ARRIVAL OF MALIK KAFUR

The Pandya kingdom (or Mabar) according to Wassaf extended "in length from Kulam to Nilawar (Nellore) nearly 300 parasangs along the sea coast and in the language of that country the king is called Dewar which signifies the Lord of Empire" (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 32). Malik Kafur arrived at Madurai on 10th April 1311. Amir Khusrau wrote that Malik Kafur,

> ...arrived at the city of Mathra (Madura), the dwelling place of the brother of the Rai Sundar Pandya. They found the city empty, for the Rai had fled with the Ranis, but had left two elephants in the temple of Jagnar (Jagannath). The elephants were captured and the temple burnt (Elliot and Dowson Vol. III: 91).

The Pandya brothers joined forces in the face of the grave danger, and Kafur was defeated by their uncle, Vikrama Pandya. Within a decade of Malik Kafur's sack of Madurai, Khusrau Khan attacked the northern parts of Mabar. The attacks seriously weakened the Pandyas, who seemed to have lost Madurai and its immediate environs to the Sultanate that was established in the region. They retained their hold in other parts of the Tamil country.

Jatavarman Vira Pandya (accession 1296) survived the civil war and the northern raids. He reigned for about fourty-four years, till 1342. His inscriptions at Tirupputtur referred to the Muslim occupation of the local temple, and the subsequent re-consecration of images there (*Madras Epigraphical Report* 119, 120 of 1908; Devakunjari 1979: 158). Madurai was finally occupied by Ulugh Khan, who conquered Mabar in 1323 CE, and remained a province of the Delhi Sultanate till 1334.

Madurai Under Muslim Rule

Madurai suffered grievously during the half century of Muslim rule, as substantiated by epigraphic evidence and chronicles (Pl. 49). They referred to Muslim rule as *tulukkaniyam*, *tulukkavanam*, and *tulukkar kalaham*. A record from Tirukkalakkudi dated 1364 (*Madras Epigraphical Report* 64 of 1916, Report, part II, para 33), mentioned the disorder caused by Muhammadans,

> The times were Tulukkan times, the *devadana* lands of the gods were taxed with *kudimai*, the temple worship, however, had to be conducted without any reduction; the *ulavu* or cultivation of the temple lands were done by turns by the tenants of the village (Devakunjari 1979: 162-166).

Salvage Strategies at Temple

Several Tamil chronicles presented exhaustive accounts of the attack on the Minakshi temple and the steps taken to safeguard the images. The *Madurai Sthanikar Varalaru* recorded that the *Sthanikars* (trustees) of the temple made a *kilikkundu* for the

Swami in the *garbhagriha*. They raised earth mounds to block the entrance to the *garbhagriha*, and built a stone wall to protect the original *lingam*. A replica was set up in the *ardha mandapam*. The *Sthanikars* also performed *ashtabandhanam* for the goddess (*moola peru Nachiyar*) and placed her on the upper storey of the *Vimanam*. They further carried out *Pupadanam* (burying in the ground) for the images near the Muchukundeswars shrine (Krishnan 2014: 39). The replica *lingam* was damaged by Malik Kafur; but saved the original from the invaders. The *Madurai Sthanikar Varalaru* stated,

> In the month of *Ani* of S. 1245 (1323 AD) the Padshah *vasal mantri* Adi Sultan and Malukka Nemiyar came from Delhi with 60,000 horses, destroyed Siva and Visnu temples and tanks, plundered temple treasuries (*sribhandaram*), mutilated images (*bimbam*) and reached Trichinopoly. There also the *sthanikas* were removed and temples were destroyed. Hearing these, king Valal Vilitturangum Parakrama Pandya was alarmed and left the fort of Kalaiyarkoyil. Unable to stay in the city without the king's protection, the *sthanikas* of the temple of Madurai left the city after making certain provisions for the protection of the deity. They made a *kilikkundu* for the Svami in the *garbhagriha*, raised earth mounds, blocked the *garbhagriha* entrance with a stone wall and set up another Linga in the *ardha mandapa*. They did *astabhandana* for the Goddess (Mulappernacciyar) and set up the Goddess on the upper storey of the *vimana*. They did *pupadanam* (buried in the ground) for the *utsav vigrahas*, Ilaiya Nayinar and other *vigrahas* near Mucukundisvaramudaiyar shrine. The Soliya, Kulasekharapperumal, who was formerly doing *puja* in the Kariyamanikka Perumal Temple, was left in charge of the Madurai temple and the conduct of its worship. Then, taking the gold *vigraha* of the God and a few other gold *vigrahas*, the *sthanikas* left Madurai, and reached the Kilukiluppai forest in Nanjilnadu (Devakunjari 1979: 166-167).

According to the *Maduraittalavaralaru* and the *Pandyan Chronicle*, fourteen *gopuras* of the temple, the Pancaksara *tirumadil*, and the streets within were destroyed, but the *garbhagriha*, the *ardhmandapa*, and the *mahamandapa* escaped the fury of the aggressors. They stated that after vanquishing the Muslims, Kampana restored worship in the Madurai temple. Traditional accounts maintained that when the blocked doorway was opened and the earth that covered the deity removed, Kampana was astounded to discover that the lamps were still burning, and the flowers of the deity were as fresh as at the time of the daily morning *puja* (Devakunjari 1979: 167-168).

TEMPLE REBUILT

Kampana's overthrow of the Madurai Sultanate was completed by about 1371 CE. Till the latter half of the sixteenth century, Madurai remained under Vijayanagara rule. As the Minakshi temple had been desecrated on three occasions, the temple that was rebuilt after 1371 was almost a new structure. Virtually the entire complex seen today was built during the Nayaka period (Michell 1993: 99). Some old portions were used in the new construction. As a result, the structure lacked uniformity, the pillars and other architectural features being in diverse styles[5] (Devakunjari 1979: 215).

THE SACRED CITY OF KANCHIPURAM

Kanchipuram ranked with Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya, Kasi, Kanchi, Avanti, and Dwarka, as one of the seven hallowed cities in India, death in anyone of which ensured *moksha*. Three of the six cities, Maya, Kasi, and Avanti were regarded sacred to Shiva; Ayodhya, Mathura and Dwarka were sanctified by Vishnu. Kanchi was sacred to both Shiva and Vishnu, and also to Kamakshi and Shanmukha (Skanda). It was one of the eighteenth *shakti pithas*, and a *tirtha*. It was the confluence of Shaiva, Vaishnava, Bauddha, and Jain religious streams. It was blessed by its association with Buddhaghosa, Dharampala, and Shankara (Mahalingam 1969: 1).

Kanchi was the capital of the Pallavas, who dominated the political and cultural history of south India for over six centuries. The Kanchi region, commonly known as Tondainadu or Tondaimandalam, was mentioned in early inscriptions as Tundira, Tundiraka, Tundaka-rastra and Tundakavisaya. Those were Sanskritized forms of the Tamil name Tondainadu, which was itself a Tamilised form of the Sanskrit term Pallavarastra, both *pallava* and *tondai* meaning a creeper. Tondainadu was also known as Dramila country, and was different from the kingdoms of the Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas. It included the modern districts of Chingleput, parts of the districts of Chittoor, North Arcot, and South Arcot (Mahalingam 1969: 2).

Kanchipuram was referred to in early Tamil literature and inscriptions as Kacci, Kaccipedu, Kanci, Kancinagar, Kancimanagar, and Kancipuram. The earliest Tamil reference to it was in the Sangam work *Perumbanarrupadai*, which mentioned Kacci. The *Manimekhalai* also referred to it six times, twice as Kacci, twice as Kanci, once as Kancinagar, and once as Kancimanagar (Mahalingam 1969: 4).

THE VARADARAJA SWAMI TEMPLE

The Varadaraja Swami temple, among the numerous shrines in Kanchi, was built on Hastigiri Satyavratakshetra or Attiyar hillock, at the site where Brahma was believed to have performed a sacrifice to invoke the presence of Vishnu (Ayyar 1993: 59-61). Three hymns composed by the early Alvar saint, Bhuthnathalvar confirmed the existence of the temple in Pallava times. All that remained of that era were two lion-pillars in sandstone on the tank-bund and in the Sudarsana shrine. The earliest record found in the temple so far was a ninth century CE inscription in Tamil script, which indicated the popularity of the shrine at that time (Nagaswamy 2011: 150).

The Cholas appeared to have first rebuilt an older temple, which was subsequently expanded by later Chola and

Vijayanagara rulers (Michell 1993: 26-27). There were over 350 inscriptions on the temple walls of Chola, Pandya, Hoysala, Kakatiya, and Vijayanagara rulers, and also of smaller dynasties like the Telugu-Chodas, Kadavarayas, and Sambuvarayas. The number of epigraphs declined considerably after the Vijayanagara era, perhaps a reflection of the uncertainty that followed the battle of Talikota. There was one inscription of the Nawab of the Carnatic, who controlled the Kanchi region in the early eighteenth century[6] (Raman 1975: 11-12).

MUSLIM GARRISON AT MADURAI

A Muslim garrison was established at Madurai in 1327 CE in the aftermath of the Tughlaq invasion. The Hoysala ruler, Vira Ballala III moved against that garrison. An inscription dated 1335 CE, mentioned a brief visit of his to the Varadaraja temple (Raman 1975: 25).

In popular lore, Kampana of Vijayanagara was acclaimed for freeing the land of *tulukas* (Muslims), and restoring worship in several temples. There was an inscription of his, dated S 1288 (1367 CE), in the Varadaraja temple [33 of 1890]. Kampana was aided in his southern campaigns by the generals Gopana and Saluva Mangu, of whom the latter was mentioned in two inscriptions in the temple (Aiyangar 1952: 219). Several inscriptions of Kampana were found in Chingleput, South Arcot district, and other parts of the Tamil country (152 of 1953, 210 of 1912 etc., Sewell 1882: 172, 178). [Kampana died in 1374, his father ruled till 1377].

About a century later, in 1481 CE, the Bahmani ruler, Muhammad Shah III (1463-1482) attacked Kanchi. Ferishta and Taba-Taba categorically mentioned his plunder of the holy city. According to Ferishta, the Bahmani Sultan was informed of the "the temple of Kinjee, the walls and roof of which were plated with gold, ornamented with precious stones..." The Sultan selected six thousand soldiers from his army and marched towards the city,

> Crowds, like bees, now issued from within (the temple), and ranged themselves under the walls to defend it. The troops coming up, the Sultan assaulted the place, which was carried with great slaughter of the Hindoos. An immense plunder fell to the victor, who took nothing away but gold, jewels, and silver, so abundant were those valuable commodities. The Sultan then plundered the city of Kinchee and after reposing in it for a week, returned to his grand army (Ferishta Vol. I 1794: 166-167).

Taba-Taba wrote of the attack,

> From the rise of Islam up to this time, no Muhammadan monarch had set foot in it; no stranger had laid hand on the cheek of the bride of that idol-temple (Srinivasan 1979: 228).

The Vijayanagara general, Saluva Narasimha (a descendant of Saluva Mangi who had assisted Kampana in his southern campaigns) dispatched troops under Isvara Nayaka, who drove out the Sultan and even recovered much of the treasure (Aiyangar 1919: 90-92; Sastri and Venkataramanayya 1946 Vol. I: 137-138).

The reign of Krishnadeva Raya (1509-1529) was a milestone in the history of south India. He brought virtually the entire region under his control. He frequently visited sacred sites (Venkataramanayya 1935: 449). Sixteen of his inscriptions were found at the Varadaraja temple, dating from S 1431 to S 1451 (1510-1528 CE). Some recorded his benefactions in memory of his father and mother. The inscriptions began with the usual historical introduction in Sanskrit, and were recorded in Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada. Subsequent rulers of the dynasty, particularly Achyuta Raya (r. 1530-1542), also visited the temple and made donations (Raman 1975: 28-30).

By around 1672, the Golconda rulers had established their power in the Tondaimandalam region. Madanna and Akkanna were then two powerful Brahmin ministers at Golconda. Madanna appointed his nephew, Podelle Lingappa, Collector of the province of Pundamalli which included Kanchi. Podelle

Lingappa constructed some minor temples in the city. In 1676, the Maratha leader, Shivaji moved into the Carnatic region. In 1678, he arrived at Kanchi on route to capture Pundamalli and thereafter to lay siege to the English fort at Madras. His plans, however, changed and he died in 1680. In 1686 and 1687, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb annexed Bijapur and Golconda. The Mughal forces reached Kanchipuram; Shivaji's son and successor Sambhaji, resisted them, but was defeated in 1688 (Raman 1975: 37).

IMAGES KEPT OUT OF TEMPLE FOR TWENTY-TWO YEARS

Due to fear of Aurangzeb's iconoclastic zeal, the authorities of three important temples – Varadaraja, Ekamresvara, and Kamakshi Amman – quietly removed the deities from Kanchi in 1688 CE. The images of Varadaraja and his consorts were camouflaged as corpses and taken to the Udayarpalayam jungles in Tiruchirapalli District. In 1710 CE, when the danger abated, preparations commenced to bring back the deities. The local chieftain of Udayarpalayam was, however, loath to let the images leave his territory. Thereupon, the Vaishnava ascetic, Srimat Paramahamsa Parivrajakacharya Attan Jiyar[7] directed his disciple, Lala Todarmalla to intercede; and the images were successfully brought back to the Varadaraja temple. Their re-installation after twenty-two years was recorded in a long inscription on a slab near the Tayar shrine, dated S 1632 corresponding to 1710 CE. The Madras Epigraphical Department (pp. 104 &105 for 1920-1921) recorded,

> According to the inscription on the slab in front of the Thayar shrine in the Varadarajaswami temple the Delhi Emperor Aurangzeb fitted out an expedition about 1688 AD against the Mahrattas of the South and Conjeevaram, in common with several other important centres of South India, felt the shock of this iconoclastic invasion. The temple

authorities of the three premier temples of that city thereupon apprehending desecration at the profane hands of the invaders disguised the images of the temple gods as corpses and conveyed them secretly out of the town and found an asylum in the jungles of Udayarpalayam in the Trichinopoly district. But when the danger was past and Conjeevaram was considered safe, the local chieftain of Udayarpalayam, who was much enraptured at the image of the god refused to restore it to its original abode at Kanchi, with the result that at the special intercession of Attan Jiyar, his disciple Lala Todarmalla terrorised the chief with a strong contingent of troops at his back and safely brought back in Saka 1632 (1710 AD) the image and reinstated it in the temple with great pomp and splendour. This incident is even today commemorated in an annual festival called the *Udayarpalayam* festival. A set of three statues, probably those of Todarmalla is left uncared for in a lamp room in the recess of the gopura called Tondar-adippodi-vasal (Ayyar 1993: 77-78).[8]

THE KAILASANATHA TEMPLE – WORSHIPPED RESUMED AFTER KAMPANA'S INTERVENTION

The Rajasimhesvara temple, now known as the Kailasanatha temple, was built in the early eighth century by the illustrious Pallava ruler, Rajasimha (700-728 CE), after whom it was named. The temple was enlarged by his son, Mahendravarman III and was the oldest surviving temple in Kanchi. Its architectural beauty and exquisite sculptures were the principle source of inspiration for the Chalukya temple at Pattadakal, and the Kailash temple at Ellora (Nagaswamy 1969: 1-2). A large statue of Nandi, resting on a ruined *mandapa* looked towards the two and a half metre high 16-faceted black stone *linga*, hidden within the innermost sanctum located below the main *vimana* (Michell 1993: 23-25). The *vimana* was the loftiest stone tower in Tamil Nadu when built, and was called the great stone temple in inscriptions (Nagaswamy 1969: 16-17).[9]

The earliest inscription, in the front *mandapa* in Kannada haracters, was engraved on orders of the Chalukya king, ikramaditya II who captured Kanchi probably within a ecade of the construction of the temple. Vikramaditya II came Kanchi to avenge the defeat of his predecessors by the allavas. Kanchi was then ruled by Nandivarman Pallavamalla. ikramaditya II was captivated by the Kailasanatha temple, nd the Kannada inscription recorded his gift of gold to the hrine. He took back some artisans from Kanchi to his ingdom, where the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal was built Nagaswamy 1969: 14-15).

The Kailasanatha temple was also a beneficiary of ampana's concern for Hindu temples. An enquiry by one of is officers, Koppanangal had revealed that properties of the emple had been transferred to a nearby shrine. That was onsidered an impious act. Kampana ordered the properties o be immediately restored. An inscription of Kampana, dated 1364 CE at the Kailasanatha temple recorded his reinstatement f worship in the temple that had long been abandoned (*South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. I: 117, 120, 123; Nagaswamy 1969: 20-21).

THE NATARAJA TEMPLE – CHIDAMBARAM

It was at the site of the Chidambaram temple that Shiva Nataraja was believed to have performed the cosmic dance for the sages Patanjali (the serpent-bodied Patanjali was regarded an incarnation of Adisesa) and Vyagrapada (the tiger-footed sage). The temple ranked among the most important Shiva shrines in south India (Ayyar 1993: 204-205).

The earliest name of the site was Tillai (after the Tillai tree, once abundant in the area). Later, it was known as Puliyur or Vyagra, after Vyagrapada, the foremost devotee of the place. Still later, as it rose in importance in Shaiva hagiology, it was renowned as Perumparrappuliyur, or Puliyur. After the establishment of the Nataraja cult, it became celebrated as the place of the ethereal *linga* of *Jnana-Akasa*. From that came the name Cit Sabha. Cit Ambalam (=sabha) became Chidambaram – also Cirrambalam and Tiruccirrambalam. *Ambalam* meant 'sabha' (or Hall) in Tamil, in Malayalam it meant 'open space' and 'temple', while in Sanskrit it denoted 'open sky', 'ether.' Cit-ambaram was another word for *Cit-akasa* (Nanda 2004: 10). After the discovery of the *Tevaram* hymns (the compositions of Nayanar saints Sambandhar, Appar, and Sundaramurti) at Chidambaram, it became the temple par excellence – *Koyil*, the temple of temples – of the Shaivites (Nanda 2004: 9).

The *Chidambara Mahatmyam* (a part of the *Skanda Puranam*), the *Koyil Puranam* (Tamil), and the *Kuncitanghristavam* (Sanskrit) provided details of the early saints, Vyagrapada and Patanjali, who were associated with the temple (Smith 1996: 31-43). The Nataraja cult seemed to have been established at Tillai between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE. The temple appeared to have existed from the third-fourth century. It then consisted only of the *Mulasthanam*; it was reconstructed under the Pallavas and Cholas (Natarajan 1994: 8-9, 12-19). The *sphatika* (crystal) *linga* and the '*Chidambaram Rahasyam*' were as old as the temple, and inherent in the concept of Nataraja (Natarajan 1994: 29). According to the *Chidambara Mahatmyam*, the temple priests were brought from *antarvedi* (the Ganga-Yamuna doab). Umapati Shivacharya, the priest of Chidambaram and a leading figure of Shaiva Siddhanta, wrote a major Sanskrit poem, the *Kuncitanghristava* (The Hymn of Praise to [Nataraja's] Curved Foot) around 1300 CE in honour of Nataraja (Smith 1996).

WORSHIP DISRUPTED – 1311-1388

Malik Kafur's invasion of 1311 CE had grim consequences for the Nataraja temple, some of which were revealed by N. Sethuraman and K.V. Ramesh (Government Epigraphist, Mysore). In 1989, they discovered two copper plates in the library of the Tiruppanandal Math (Thanjavur district). The plates showed that due to the northern attacks, the temple was deprived of its daily rituals from 1311 to 1383/88 CE (Natarajan 1994: 109-110).

ONLY *PAL NAIVEDYAM* (MORNING MILK) OFFERED TO THE DEITY

The first copper plate in Grantha characters, dated 1388 CE, disclosed that for around sixty to seventy years, the *maha naivedyam* (food offering to Nataraja), *angarangbhogam,* and related temple rituals were not performed. During those decades, only *pal naivedyam* (morning milk) was offered to the deity. The temple rites were resumed only on the intervention of prince Virupaksha (great-grandson of the Yadava ruler, Ramachandra and son of the Vijayanagara ruler Harihara II, 1377-1404). The copper plate also recorded a royal grant of land for temple ceremonies and re-commencement of the car festival. It bore the signatures of both king Harihara II and prince Virupaksha, in Kannada (Natarajan 1994: 110-111). In all probability, prince Virupaksha also gifted the gold leaves on the Cit Sabha in 1383/88 CE (*Epigraphia Indica* Vol. VIII: 298-301). The number of gold leaves was increased in the seventeenth century by the Maratha leader, Sambhaji.

The second copper plate, in Kannada in the Nagari script, dated 1383 CE, recorded the grant of village Punnattur to the temple by a minister of Harihara II. It was signed by prince Virupaksha (Natarajan 1994: 110). The Nataraja image was not removed from the temple during those seventy years.

NATARAJA TWICE REMOVED FROM CHIDAMBARAM (1649-1686 CE)

The situation, however, deteriorated in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, and the Dikshitars (temple priests), fearful of the safety of the images of Nataraja and his Consort, twice took them out of the temple. Se. Rasu (of Tamil University, Thanjavur), in his work *Tanjai Marattiyar Seppedugal-50* (1983), cited evidence of the deities being escorted out of the temple during the years 1649-1684 CE. He referred to four copper plates, in Sanskrit and Tamil, numbered 45 to 48, mentioned as 'Tiruvarur copper plates 4, 5, 6, and 7.'

The copper plates recorded -

1. Nataraja and Sivakamasundari were absent from Chidambaram for 37 years, 10 months and 20 days (from 24-12-1648 to 14-11-1686). For the first forty months, the images were housed in Kudumiyanmalai (in the former Pudukkottai State), in Pandya country. Subsequently, they were taken to Madurai. The threat from the Bijapur Sultanates was a prime reason for the flight of the deities. During that period, the Chidambaram temple was described as 'in a state of ruin.' Nataraja and Sivakamasundari were back in the temple on 14-11-1686.
2. Sambhaji, the Maratha ruler at Ginjee, who controlled the area north of the Coleroon (Kollidam) river, directed Gopala Pandit (Gopala Dadaji), his agent at Parangippettai, to carry out repairs at the Nataraja temple.
3. Renovations were carried out, the Cit Sabha was gilded, and a *kumbhabhishekam* conducted in 1684 CE by Muthiah Dikshitar.
4. Another *kumbhabhishekam* was performed in 1686 CE for the consecrated Cit Sabha (Natarajan 1994: 119-120).

By 1684 CE, the Marathas had replaced the Nayaka dynasty, and Shahji II, a devotee of Tyagesa of Tiruvarur, occupied the Thanjavur throne. He was a staunch Shaivite, and spearheaded the safe return of Nataraja to Chidambaram. It was around the same time that another Maratha, Sambhaji had initiated the consecration, gilding of the Cit Sabha, and two *kumbhabhishekams* at the temple in 1684 and 1686 (Natarajan 1994: 120).

Manucci described Sambhaji's tragic end shortly afterwards (1689 CE) at the hands of Aurangzeb,

> Aurangzeb ordered him to be bound strongly upon a camel, and on his head was placed a long cap covered with little bells and rattles. This was meant for mockery of the Hindu princes and the Brahmans, who usually wear pointed caps, but without rattles. ... The camel was made to run, so that the rattles made a great noise and aroused everyone's curiosity, and thus men issued from their tents to see who it was coming. In the course of the procession they made the camel turn from time to time with such suddenness, that the person on it looked as if he must fall from the various movements he made, but the cords with which he was bound prevented it and at the same time wearied him out. Finally, when the perambulation of the royal camp had been completed, the tyrant ordered him to be dragged into his presence. When there he ordered his side to be cloven open with an axe and his heart to be extracted. The body was then flung on a dunghill and abandoned to the tender mercies of the dogs (Manucci Vol. II 1907: 311-312).

The 'Tiruvarur copper plates' did not specify the precise period the icons were kept at Madurai (though they provided the exact dates of the stay at Kudumiyanmalai). It was likely that for reasons of safety the Dikshitars kept moving the images in Pandya territory. Possibly, the Maratha ruler heard of the images in the Pandya region, and arranged for their safe return to Chidambaram in 1684 CE (Natarajan 1994: 120).

During a visit to Kudumiyanmalai in January 1993, the scholar B. Natarajan noticed a tunnel in the *Mukamanapa* of the Sikhagirisa temple, where according to popular belief, the icons had been kept. He noted that many families in Kudumiyanmalai had embraced Nataraja as their *kula deivam*, and that the names Nataraja and Kanakasabhapati were very common in the area. The deity's sojourn at Kudumiyanmalai appeared to have deeply influenced the culture of the area (Natarajan 1994: 120).

THE AMBALAPPULI EPISODE

In an article in the 1940 *Deepavali Malar* issue of the Tamil Magazine *Ananda Vikatan*, Mahamahopadhyaya U.V. Swaminatha Iyer explained the gap in information on the movement of the icons from Kudumiyanmalai to Madurai. The article was reproduced in the second volume of his book, *Ninalvu Manjari* (Collection of Memories).

According to that account, following a Bijapur invasion, the Dikshitars moved the icons of Nataraja and Sivakamasundari from the Cit Sabha to an "unknown destination." After travelling southward for some time, the Dikshitars arrived at a dense tamarind forest (*Puli* – in Tamil). There they chanced upon an old tamarind tree, with an immense trunk that had a hole large enough to accommodate the two *murtis*. After placing the images there, the Dikshitars closed the opening to avoid any suspicion, and returned to Chidambaram.

When political conditions improved, it was resolved to bring back the deities. But memory of the precise location of the tree had dimmed with years. The younger generation of Dikshitars sent to retrieve the images were unable to identify the tree where the images had been placed in the darkness of a night. They were in great anguish when they heard an old farmer shout to a farm boy: "Take the bulls along the foot of Ambalappuli. I shall join you very soon." The Dikshitars promptly followed the boy, who soon reached a large tamarind tree. The anxious Dikshitars questioned the boy why the tree was known as Ambalappuli. The boy replied the name had been given by his master.

Thereupon, the Dikshitars met the Vellala chief, and informed him that they would like to inspect the Ambalappuli tree as it possibly 'contains their property.' The Vellala immediately grasped the import of the request, but wanted the Dikshitars recount their story. They appealed to him to end their agony. "... You are a true devotee of Nataraja and have earned his bounteous grace by protecting Him all these years." The Vellala replied,

> During the years of political turmoil, when once I chanced to look at this tamarind tree (which is located within the limits of my property), I noticed that a large hole had been closed. I realized that there should have been some reason for the closure. I opened it up and was surprised and pleased to see Lord Nataraja's icon in it. I did not want word to get round that the icon was concealed there. I closed the hole again, as I could guess that the political disturbances were responsible for this concealment. I was, however, haunted by a feeling of guilt that Nataraja was lying in neglect here without the prescribed worship. I gave people to understand that I had a dream in which it was revealed to me that there was a godly element in this particular tree. From then on, regular worship has been offered to this tree.

The overwhelmed Dikshitars said: "Even if you could not conduct the worship that we offer to Him at the Cit Sabha, Nataraja will be conscious of your deep devotion." They gathered the icons and readied for the return journey (Natarajan 1994: 122).

Some scholars linked the incident to Puliangudi village, about thirty km from Srivilliputtur (in Tamil Nadu). The bazaar street in nearby Rajapalayam was still known as 'Ambalappuli bazaar'. Others hold that Ambalappuli was near Sengottai. Yet another view regarded the exile to have been in Kerala – in Alappula and Ambalappula (Natarajan 1994: 120-122).

B. Natarajan was of the view that the Ambalappuli episode described by U.V. Swaminatha Iyer would have occurred between 1649 and 1684 CE. During those years, Nataraja first stayed at Kudumiyanmalai, and then at Madurai in the third phase. The Ambalappuli episode was almost an *ajnatavasa* for Nataraja and Sivakamasundari as the Dikshitars intended it to be (Natarajan 1994: 124).

POLITICAL CONVULSIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

There was a fresh round of turmoil in the eighteenth century when, from 1749 to 1784 CE, the Nataraja temple served as a fort and witnessed combat during the Anglo-French wars. In 1753 CE, it was seized from the British by the French and Marathas, who held it till 1760 (Natarajan 1974: 63; Swamy 1979: 79). That year, the English under Sir Eyre Coote, finally defeated the French garrison at Wandiwash (present Vandavasi). The French were driven back to Pondicherry, which too they lost in January 1761.

In 1780 CE, during his invasion of the Carnatic, Haider Ali occupied the town and temple of Chidambaram. On 1st July 1781, at Porto Novo, near Chidambaram, Sir Eyre Coote decisively overpowered Haider Ali. Before Haider Ali's death in December 1782, Sir Eyre Coote attacked the temple, but his troops were pushed back. The damage to the temple due to the Carnatic and Mysore wars remains visible. Some valuable stone sculptures of the lower tiers of the *gopurams*, and the cloistered halls near the third wall of enclosure were badly damaged (Natarajan 1994: 123).

NATARAJA SHIFTED AGAIN, FOR TWO DECADES

Worship in the temple was again disrupted during its military occupation from 1753 to 1760 CE, followed by events up to 1781. The images of Nataraja and Sivakamasundari were shifted to the present Sabhapati *mantapam* at Tiruvarur (Thanjavur district). On that occasion Nataraja was absent from Chidambaram for two decades. An inscription in Grantha characters found in the Thousand Pillared *mantapam* at Chidambaram mentioned the return of the deities and their re-installation in the Cit Sabha in Saka year 1696, *Masi, Krishna Paksha, Mula* star, *Trayodasi tithi*. Tulaja II was then the Maratha ruler at Tanjore (Pl. 50). The covered palanquin in which Nataraja was carried to Tiruvarur and then brought back to

Chidambaram remained carefully preserved at the temple (Natarajan 1994: 123).

GOVINDARAJA AT CHIDAMBARAM AND TIRUPATI

Chidambaram (Tillai) was an interesting instance of a religious centre sacred to devotees of Shiva and Vishnu (Nanda 2004: 11). Several temples had shrines of Shiva and Vishnu alongside; Chidambaram was among the most prominent (Sastri Vol. II 1937: 486).

The Mohini/Bhikshatana (Shiva) episode in the Daruka forest, as narrated in the various *Puranas*, showed the eclecticism of Tillai. Tillai Tiruc-Chidambaram was sacred to Shaivites; Tillai Tiruc-Chitrakutam was equally hallowed for the Vaishnavites. Tillai Tiruc-Chitrakutam was an elevated platform at Chidambaram on which the Govindaraja image was consecrated.

Among the early references to the Govindaraja shrine were by Tirumangai Alvar and Kulasekhara Alvar, who mentioned Vishnu (the stone image) and Rama (the metal image) being worshipped by 'Tillai Three Thousand' Brahmins (*Tillai Muvayiravar*), as per *Shastric* injunctions. It seemed that the Govindaraja shrine occupied the same space as presently (Aiyangar 2004: 317-318). That could also indicate that the Dikshitars managed the entire complex, including the Govindaraja (Vishnu) shrine. Indeed, some scholars have argued that the Vishnu shrine was then not a separate entity, independent of the Nataraja temple. From Tirumangai Alvar's verses, the Govindaraja shrine seemed to have been established by the Pallava ruler, Nandivarman (726-775 CE).

Manikkavacakar, in verse 86 of his *Tiruc-cirrambalak-kovaiyar,* described Vishnu as lying on the serpent-couch in the courtyard of Tiruc-Chitrakutam beseeching Nataraja, who had already revealed one foot. The recumbent Vishnu prayed that Nataraja might show the other foot as well,

> He (Vishnu) who tried in vain by splitting open the earth, in order to see the two feet of Him who destroyed the Tripura, begged of Siva with extended hands to show them, out of mercy, for worship. Then the Lord moved somewhat showed Vishnu one of his legs. Thereupon Vishnu lay prostrate (*bhoga sayana*) in the Hall of Tillai in order that his prayers to see the other leg might be granted (Natarajan 1994: 27, 165).

GOVINDARAJA SENT TO 'THE ORIGINAL HOME OF HARI'

The scholar, B. Natarajan was of the view that Nataraja and Govindaraja were almost simultaneously established at Chidambaram (Natarajan 1994: 27). But centuries of peaceful co-existence between followers of the two deities allegedly gave way to antipathy in the reign of Chola ruler, Kulottunga II (1133-1150). His court-poet, Ottakkuttan stated that for the expansion of the Shiva temple, "Vishnu god had to be forced back to his former abode – the sea" (Aiyangar 2004: 318-319).

The *Prapannamrtam* mentioned a Chola king, Krimikanta (identified as Kulottunga II), who was said to have thrown out the Govindaraja image. The *Kulottunga Colan Ula* and *Rajaraja Colan Ula* also stated that Kulottunga II sent Govindaraja to 'the original home of Hari,' that is, the sea (Natarajan 1994: 108).

Contemporary Vaishnavite literature holds that the image of Govindaraja was thrown into the sea (near Killai), from where it was retrieved and taken to Lower Tirupati. There Ramanuja consecrated and enshrined the image in what was now known as the Govindaraja temple. According to M. Raghava Aiyangar, the removal of the image and its consecration at Lower Tirupati took place sometime between 1123 and 1136 CE, perhaps nearer the latter date (Natarajan 1994: 165-166).

S. K. Aiyangar, however, argued that no inscription referred to the issue; "the matter was believed to be traditional and nothing more" (Aiyangar 2004: 316-317). According to Nilakanta Sastri, it was difficult to identify Kulottunga II as the persecutor of Ramanuja (Sastri Vol. I 1935: 355-357). Dr. R. Nagaswamy, too, questioned the veracity of the story, particularly the role of Ramanuja (Nagaswamy 2008: 14, 36-38, 52-53).

B. Natarajan referred to a local lore that even the massive Mulavar (Vishnu lying on the serpent-couch) stone image was thrown into the sea, near Killai. The fishermen of the area quickly retrieved it, and placed it in some obscure place within the precincts of the Chidambaram temple, pending its reinstatement. B. Natarajan argued that from the twelfth to the early fourteenth century, Nataraja was the only deity in worship at Chidambaram. It was not certain whether an image of Govindaraja was in the temple grounds during that period. But there was no reference to any grant made to the deity in those centuries. Even Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I, a devotee of both Shiva and Vishnu, was recorded to have made gifts only to Nataraja at Chidambaram in the thirteenth century (Natarajan 1994: 108, 166).

The next reference to the Govindaraja shrine came in the time of the Vaishnava *acharya*, Vedanta Desika (1268-1369 CE). Due to his intervention, worship in the Govindaraja shrine was said to have resumed, with the help of Gopana of Ginji (Srinivasachari 1943: 79-80). A stone image of Vedanta Desika was kept in the Govindaraja shrine at Chidambaram (Natarajan 1974: 53).

Despite his pronounced Vaishnava leanings, no grant of the Vijayanagara king, Krishnadeva Raya to the Govindaraja shrine has been documented. So, though the deity could have been restored, the shrine remained in a state of neglect (Natarajan 1994: 113). A record of 1539 CE of the Vijayanagara king, Achyuta Raya (ARE 272 of 1913) stated that he ordered the image of Govindaraja at Perumparrappuliyur in Valudalampattu *usavadi* (a sub-division of Vennaiyur-Nadu in

Rajadhiraja valanadu) be instated according to the rituals of *Vaikhanasa Sutra.* He granted 500 *pon,* the income from four villages, for its daily worship. The encouragement for that move was provided by the Vaishnava teacher, Doddacarya alias Mahacarya of Sholinghur. But did Achyuta Raya consecrate or re-consecrate the image? If he re-consecrated, it strengthened the view that the Govindaraja image was present in the temple prior to Achyuta Raya's reign. It could have occupied one of the *mantapas* in the Tirumaligaippatti (platform near the wall) around Nataraja's shrine. No epigraphic evidence indicated that in Achyuta Raya's time or earlier, there was a separate shrine for Govindaraja (Natarajan 1994: 166). An unfinished inscription of the same ruler (1538 CE) recorded the re-consecration of Govindaraja at Chitrakuta (ARE I of 1915; Ayyar 1993: 242; Mitchell 1995: 79).[10]

FRESH DISPUTE

Father Henry Heras recorded a fresh dispute between Shaivites and Vaishnavites in the year 1597 CE. The cause of friction was the placement of Vaishnava symbols in front of the Vishnu shrine; which provoked strong objections from the Shaivites. Krishnappa Nayaka (of Ginji) seemed to have made some improvements to the Vishnu shrine, and even enlarged it (Aiyangar 1919: 272). Father Henry Heras wrote in 1597,

> A notable instance of the struggle between the two sects is the lamentable event that took place at Chidambaram in the year 1597, when Krishnappa Nayaka of Jinji, himself a staunch Vaishnava, was there superintending the improvements which he had ordered at the temple of Govinda Raja within the great Saiva temple. Father N. Pimenta, who passed through Chidambaram at this time, narrates in one of his letters that on this occasion a great controversy that arose as to whether it were lawful to place the Signe of Perumal in the Temple at Chidambaram. Some

> refused, others by their Legats importunately urged, and the Naichus of Gingi Decreed to erect it in the temple (Heras 1927: 553).

According to Father Heras, Father Pimenta's account ndicated that after the restoration of the image in the temple y Rama Raya, it was again removed and the shrine probably estroyed. In order to re-install it with due honour, Krishnappa ayaka ordered the old shrine be repaired "and even perhaps nlarged" (Heras 1927: 553). That was the cause of the trouble. ather Pimenta, who passed through Chidambaram during hat period, wrote,

> The Priests of the Temple which were the Treasures (were) withstanding, and threatening, if it were done, to cast down themselves from the top. The Brachmanes of the Temple swore to do the like after they buried the former, which yet after better advice they performed not.

As Krishnappa Nayaka was undeterred, the priests climbed o one of the temple *gopurams*, and started to throw themselves own while he was in the temple. Father Pimenta continued,

> About twentie had perished in that precipitation on that day of our departure, whereat the Naichus, angrie, caused his Gunners to shoot at the rest, which killed two of them, the rest wandering in uncertain places. A Woman also was so hote in this zealous quarrel that shee cut her own throat (Heras 1927: 553-554).

Krishnappa Nayaka achieved his objective. According to Father Heras, the struggle between the two sects was practically over by the reign of Venkata II (or Venkatapati Raya, r. 1585-1614) (Heras 1927: 554). In 1643, Sri Ranga of the Aravidu dynasty of Vijayanagara (r. 1642-1652), then ruling from Vellore, renovated the *gopuram* and *mukhamantapa* (the big *mantapa*) in front of the Govindaraja shrine, as well as the *vimanas* of his Consort and Andal, and also the *mantapa* in front of Tiruvalli Alvar (inscription No. 271 of 1913; Natarajan 1994: 119, 167).

There was more trouble between the custodians of the Shiva and Vishnu shrines in the latter half on the eighteenth century. As a consequence, worship in the Govindaraja shrine was interrupted and the entrance closed. On 17th October 1796, priests of the Nataraja temple submitted a *kararnama* (agreement), and the following year, on orders from the Nawab of Arcot, the privileges of both parties were specified. But, in 1849 CE there were again signs of conflict.

In 1862 CE, the Dikshitars of the Nataraja temple and the management of the Govindaraja shrine were compelled to agree that there would be no meddling in the rituals and festivals of the Nataraja temple, and the Vaishnavite management could organize worship at the Govindaraja shrine, but must undertake not to celebrate the *Brahmotsavam* of their temple. The agreement was approved by the courts in 1867 CE (Natarajan 1994: 168).

Peace Returns

In 1896 CE, during renovations at the Shiva shrine, the *shankha* and *chakra* of the Vishnu temple were reported to have been dishonoured, the *vimana* of the Narasimhasvami shrine demolished, the icons of the Alvars removed from the Alvar shrine, and the *Asthana Mantapa* pulled down. The Vaishnavites feared threats to other Vishnu shrines as well. During British rule, the disputes between the two shrines were taken to the courts with varying results. Thereafter, contentious issues were set aside, and the managements of both shrines resolved to co-exist in harmony.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar of Chettinad, founder of the Annamalai University at Chidambaram, facilitated the renovation of the ruined *mantapa* in front of the Nataraja and Govindaraja shrines, repaired the dilapidated latter shrine, reconstructed e *gopuram* and the *vimana* over the *garbhagrha*, and the *sannidhi* self. An era of peace was thus ushered in after decades of onflict (Natarajan 1994: 168).

BRIHADISWARA – GRAND CHOLA TEMPLE, ALSO PATRONIZED BY SUCCESSIVE DYNASTIES

he Brihadiswara temple at Tanjore (Thanjavur) was the most mbitious architectural enterprise of Rajaraja I (985-1015 CE). uring his reign he built over fifty temples, including one in ri Lanka. Brihadiswara was "a fitting symbol" of his agnificent achievements (Sivaramamurti 2004: 14). An npressive 216 feet in height, when constructed it was the allest shrine in India. Work on the temple commenced in 1004 E, the 19th regnal year of Rajaraja, and was completed in 010 CE, when the Emperor gave the crowning *kudam* (water ot), that was placed on the copper peak of the shrine. An nscription of Rajaraja's grandson, Rajendra II (r. 1052-63) ecorded that *Rajarajesvara Natakam*, a play on the construction f the temple, was staged at a grand festival in Tanjore (Dehejia 990: 51-55).

For construction of the temple, Rajaraja drew on the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Agamas*, *Tattvas*, and Tamil tradition. His guru, Ishana Shiva Pandita (who also served as the chief priest of the temple), and architect Rajaraja-perum-taccan, played central roles in the implementation of the project. The temple was the first to depict 108 poses (*karanas)* of Bharat's *Natyashastra* (southern version) in the exact sequence they were enumerated in the text, in sculptural form on the upper floor of the *garbha griha*. Also unique was the portrayal of ten personified weapons, the *Dasayudhas*, which confirmed the influence of the *Agamas* in the construction of the temple (Nagaswamy 2010: 2-9; Dehejia 1990: 63-64).

The Emperor directed that everything associated with the temple, including details of the images instated, the donations made, the names and numbers of temple functionaries, among other particulars, be engraved on the temple walls. An inscription, etched in nine sections and 107 paragraphs on the main temple, recorded that in 1011 CE,

> To the Supreme Lord of Rajarajesvara temple, we constructed of stone at Tanjavur, let all the gifts made by us, those made by (our) elder sister (*akkan*), those made by our wives (*nam pendukal*), and those made by other donors to the sacred stone temple (*tirukkarrali*) of Shri-Rajarajeshvaramudaiyar be engraved in stone on the *shrivimana* (*South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. 2 No.1: 176).

Besides the Emperor, his sister, queens, commanders, and other officers made lavish offerings. These included sixty-six metal images (of which only two remain), vast quantities of ornaments, gold and precious gems, ritual materials, and implements. The name, height, form, jewels with their cost, and other details of every metal image were enumerated. The Emperor was the benefactor of all the images, and donors bequeathed images as per his directions. Rajaraja gifted an image of his guru, and seven Ganesh bronzes in various postures. He also conferred a Devaradevar, an image of his deity for personal worship, in the form of Chandrashekhara (Moon-crested Lord). The images included rare forms, such as the Panchadehamurti, a form of Shiva with five bodies (Michell and Peterson 2010: 21-22).[11]

Rajaraja's elder sister Kundavai, the most generous sponsor after the king, gave images of her parents, two Uma-Parameshvari icons, along with jewels, golden flowers, and ritual accoutrements. The queens of Rajaraja presented several images. The headman of Poygainadu and manager of the temple presented a group of bronzes (Michell and Peterson 2010: 21-22). The gifts of Rajaraja's priest, Ishana Shiva Pandita, and the Shaiva *acharya*, Pavana Pidara were also those recorded.

Rajaraja also conferred 38,604 *kalanjus* of gold, 48,000 *kalanjus* of silver and jewels, and images worth 4, 390 *kasus* (a *kalanju* was a coin or weight of the Chola period, one *kasu* was equivalent to four *kalanjus*) (Nagaswamy 2010: 9-10; Michell and Peterson 2010: 21). The lands endowed by Rajaraja, mostly in the Chola heartland but also in Sri Lanka, generated income in the form of millions of measures of rice paddy. Arrangements were also made for the regular supply of ritual foodstuffs, such as tamarind, curds, plantains, areca nut, and betel leaves (Michell and Peterson 2010: 22). Rajaraja presented to the temple the treasures of gold and jewels he obtained from his victory over the Chalukya king, Satyasraya (Sivaramamurti 2004: 5).[12]

IMAGES IN THE TEMPLE

BRIHADISWARA LINGA

The central object of worship in the temple was the enormous Brihadiswara *linga*, 3.95 metre high. Rajaraja, who had the title *Shiva-Pada-Sekhara*, one who bears the sacred feet of Shiva on his head, consecrated the Great *linga*, which he called the Supreme Lord Rajarajesvara, the overlord of Rajaraja. It was installed as soon as the basement (*adhisthana*) was completed, as suggested by the architectural historian, Pierre Pichard (Pichard 1995). The walls and the superstructure around it were constructed later. The process of the *linga pratistha* meticulously adhered to *agamic* injunctions. The *Karuvar Puranam*, a Tamil *Purana* dated to 1618 CE, detailed the events leading to the consecration of the *linga*. Two other texts that described the sanctification were the *Brhadisvara Mahatmya* in Sanskrit and the *Tancapuri Mahatmya* in Marathi, written towards the end of the eighteenth century (Nagaswamy 2010: 9, 12-17).

Besides the *linga*, four forms of Shiva received special attention in the temple. The first was dancing Shiva, a metal image named Adavallan Dakshina Meru Vitanker (the One Who Dances Well, Shiva of the Southern Meru). The second was a copper image of Maha Meru Vitankar, Shiva with his consort Parvati, seated on Meru Mountain with his two sons, Ganesh and Subrahmanya, and other deities, along with dwarfs and a tree. The image was extremely rare for such a group of metal images was not mentioned anywhere else in Tamil Nadu. An inscription in the temple noticed by Professor Nagaswamy explained the iconography of the Maha Meru Vitankar image. The images signified that Rajaraja perceived the temple as *Dakshina* Meru, southern Meru. The images of Maha Meru Vitankar and Dakshina Meru Vitankar were consecrated by Rajaraja; their consorts by his sister, Kundavai (Nagaswamy 2010: 2, 48). The names of the two other *murtis*, Thanjai Vitankar and Thanjai Alagar could refer to metal images of Shiva as Tripurantaka, Destroyer of the Demons of the Triple Cities, which was carved thirty-four times on the outer walls of the temple.

The dark passage surrounding the sanctum contained important specimens of sculptural art. Three colossal sculptures depicted Shiva in various postures. The walls and ceiling had exquisite paintings of Rajaraja, his queens, and his guru Karuvur Devar. One entire wall was covered by an enormous figure of Tripurantaka Shiva on a chariot driven by Brahma. The painting has been described as "the greatest masterpiece of the Chola artist" (Sivaramamurti 2004: 18-21).

The enormous Nandi in the inner *gopura* belonged to the sixteenth century, and was not a Chola sculpture. Rajaraja's Nandi, contemplatively licking its nose, was at some point, shifted to the south enclosure (Dehejia 1990: 56; Nagaswamy 2010: 6-7, 128-129).

The sculptures of standing Ganesh and Subrahmanya along the entrance of the *torana* towards the end of the temple were Chola sculptures of the 11th-12th century CE. It was uncertain whether they were part of the temple from the outset, or were brought from some ruined shrine. They were placed in their present positions in the nineteenth century, during the time of the Maratha ruler of Tanjore, Shivaji II (Nagaswamy 2010: 6-7, 128-129).

Some other Chola sculptures in Tanjore city pre-dated the construction of the Brihadiswara temple. Among them was the Nisumbhasudani, consecrated by Vijayalaya Chola (who founded the Cola Empire in 850 CE), a slightly later image of Kali, a ninth century Yogini, and a Ganesh of the pre-Rajaraja period (Nagaswamy 2010: 7).

VIMANA IN GOLD

An inscription at the entrance of the inner *gopura* found by Professor Nagaswamy stated that Rajaraja Cola covered the temple *vimana* with gold. Several temples in the south were covered with gold as early as the seventh century CE, the earliest being the Chidambaram temple. Brihadiswara was the tallest golden temple in India in the eleventh century (Nagaswamy 2010: 47).

KASHI OF SOUTH

According to legend, Goddess Ganga appeared before the king and told him that those who bathed in the tank and worshiped Brihadiswara would see the very Visvanatha of Kashi. *Darshan* of Kashi Visvanatha was an important event in Hindu religious life, and Visvanatha manifested in Brihadiswara was an interesting finale to this legend. The temple was visualized as Daksina Kashi and a *linga* installed on the banks of the tank in the name of Visvanatha, showed the unifying thread running through Hinduism (Nagaswamy 2010: 152).

The four important shrines in the temple complex, the main tower of the temple, the Amman shrine, the Subrahmanya shrine, and the Ganesh shrine, were all constructed by kings. The main *vimana* was constructed by Rajaraja Chola in the eleventh century CE; the Amman shrine by a Pandya king around 1400 CE, the Subrahmanya shrine by the Thanjavur

Nayaka in the sixteenth century, and the Ganesh shrine by Maratha ruler, Serfoji II in the early nineteenth century (Nagaswamy 2010: 5).

DISCOVERY OF THE TEVARAM HYMNS

Rajaraja was credited with the discovery of the *Tevaram* hymns of the three saints Appar, Sambandar, and Sundarar. He had the hymns set to the *Pann* system, the traditional scheme of recitation that continues to be followed till this day. Fifty *Tevaram* singers were appointed at the temple. The recitation of these hymns, technically called *'odutal,'* was identical to that used for Vedic recitation (Nagaswamy 2010: 233-234).

MISSING BRONZES – 64 OF 66

Of the sixty-six bronzes bestowed to the temple by Rajaraja, his queens, and nobles around the year 1010 CE, just two remain. The rest were all missing (Dehejia 1990: 73-76, 123).

ADAVALLAN DAKSHINA MERU VITANKER – IMAGE FOUND DAMAGED

An inscription in Marathi script on the pedestal of Adavallan Dakshina Meru Vitanker stated that the image was found damaged in the temple and was repaired and re-consecrated by Kamakshi Bibi Bai, queen of Maratha ruler Shivaji II, in the year 1885 CE. The repairs were due to a crack in the right ankle, where the foot was placed on the dwarf. Since the damage was in minor limbs, the image could be fixed and reinstalled for worship as per *agamic* texts (Nagaswamy 2010: 152).

The inscriptions of Rajaraja's son, Rajendra I (r. 1012-44) confirmed his continual involvement with the Brihadiswara temple. But early in his reign, he began to focus on the new capital and temple he built at Gangaikondacholapuram (the City of the King Who Conquered the Ganga).

IJAYANAGARA, NAYAKA, AND MARATHA RULERS – LL CONTINUE PATRONAGE

ontrary to the assertions of some scholars who link a temple just one king or dynasty, the Brihadiswara temple enjoyed e patronage of several dynasties that subsequently controlled e region. In the fourteenth century, the Vijayanagara kings cquired control over Tanjore. They appointed Telugu-peaking Nayaka warriors as governors of their Tamil rritories. After the sack of Vijayanagara in 1565, the Nayakas t Tanjore, Ginji, and Madurai, began to rule as autonomous ings, with Tanjore as their headquarters. They constructed a ircle of stone ramparts shielded by a moat around Thanjavur ity. The ramparts were extended to the southwest to protect he Brihadiswara temple (Michell and Peterson 2010: 25).

The Thanjavur Nayakas were primarily Vishnu devotees, nd the Vishnu Rajagopala temple at Mannargudi was their itual centre. But they extended patronage to major Shiva hrines. Raghunatha Nayaka (r. 1614-33), a known Rama devotee, performed the sixteen *dana* (ritual gifts) at Kumbakonam's Shiva temple. The greatest Shiva patron in he Nayaka period was Raghunatha's celebrated minister, Govinda Dikshita (Michell and Peterson 2010: 28). The Sanskrit work, *Brihadishvara Mahatmya* extolled the building activities of the Nayakas, whom it identified as "Cholas."

MARATHAS AT TANJORE

In 1674, Ekoji Bhonsle, a half-brother of Chhatrapati Shivaji, overthrew the Nayakas from Thanjavur, and founded a southern branch of the Marathas. Under Maratha rule, Thanjavur became the foremost cultural centre in south India (Michell and Peterson 2010: 31).

SHAHJI II AND SERFOJI I

From the time of Shahji II (r. 1684-1712), the Marathas described themselves as rulers of Cholanadu. Shahji and his successors were ardent Shaivites, and their main centre of worship was Shiva Tyagaraja at the Tiruvarur temple, that had earlier enjoyed the benefaction of the Pallavas and Cholas. The yearly festival at the temple was celebrated on a grand scale, and new dance dramas, including the *Tyagesar Kuravanji* composed by Shahji himself, were performed at the festival (Michell and Peterson 2010: 31).

Shahji also wrote multilingual songs (*padas*) in praise of Shiva as Brihadiswara. The Marathi Modi records of the Thanjavur court, available from the mid-eighteenth century, showed that the daily and annual rites and festivals at the temple continued to be held. According to those records, from 1776 onwards, an *abhisheka* was performed for the great Nandi bull as a votive ritual for rainfall. In 1729, Shahji's successor Serfoji I (r. 1712-29) performed an *ashtabandhana-kumbhabhisheka*, or grand ritual consecration. In commemoration of that event, he had the words "at the cost of Serfoji" inscribed on the gilded copper *kalasha* that was placed at the pinnacle of the temple tower to replace Rajaraja's finial that had either been damaged or stolen. According to a record from around 1700, there was a performance of the *Jivanananda* (The Joy of Life), a medical allegorical drama in Sanskrit by Shahji's Brahmin minister, Anandarayamakhin at the temple's *Brahmotsava*. That was the first mention of a dramatic performance at Brihadiswara after the *Rajarajesvara natakam* in the eleventh century (Michell and Peterson 2010: 31-32).

WORSHIP CEASED IN THE 18th-19th CENTURIES

The Brihadiswara temple was greatly affected in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as the Nawab of Arcot, the French and English East India Companies, and the Mysore ruler, Haider Ali battled each other. The English East India Company established a garrison at the temple from 1771 to 1798, when it was involved in wars with Haider Ali and ipu Sultan. Worship at the temple ceased and the structure tself was damaged (Michell and Peterson 2010: 32).

ERFOJI II ASSUMED CHARGE OF SHRINE

he English vacated the temple when Serfoji II (r. 1798-1832) scended the Thanjavur throne under their tutelage. By the reaty of 1799 with Serfoji, the Company assumed charge of ver three hundred ancient shrines of Cholanadu, the former aratha kingdom. Brihadiswara and around seventy small hrines in and around the city of Thanjavur remained under he direct management of the Palace. After twenty-seven years f occupation by a British garrison, Brihadiswara was in a uinous state. Serfoji II ordered an elaborate purification eremony at the temple, but could not wholly succeed in orestalling European presence. From 1803 on, as the apoleonic wars commenced in Europe, the small fort urrounding Brihadiswara again served as an English barrack. Nevertheless, Serfoji sponsored the largest number of texts and performances at the temple after the Cholas. In fact, he was the first king of Thanjavur after the Cholas to promote the temple as a royal shrine (Michell and Peterson 2010: 33-34).

108 *LINGAS* SANCTIFIED

According to Maratha records in Modi script preserved in the Saraswati Mahal Library, in 1801 CE, Serfoji II consecrated 108 *lingas* in the *prakara* of the Brihadiswara temple. He apparently brought them from the ruins of the great Ayirattali temple of the ninth century, in a village about ten miles from Thanjavur. The village even today has over 100 *lingas*. The *mahakumbhabhiseka* was followed by special worship for forty-eight days (Nagaswamy 2010: 7-8). In 1802, Serfoji became the first ruler of Thanjavur to undertake a pilgrimage to all the Shaiva and Vaishnava shrines in the Chola country. The court poet, Thundi Sudha Shiva chronicled his pilgrimage in the Marathi poem, *Sharabhendra Tirthavali* (Nair 2012: 102-110; Michell and Peterson 2010: 35).

In 1803, the entire text of *Bhonsle-vamsa-charitra* (Historical Narrative of the Bhonsle Dynasty) in the Devanagari script was engraved in forty-six panels on the temple walls. The text traced the ancestry of Serfoji II and the Thanjavur Bhonsles to Chhatrapati Shivaji. Serfoji's son, Shivaji II (r. 1832-55) commissioned mural portraits of the entire Maratha dynasty from Chhatrapati Shivaji and his queen on the walls of the Subrahmanya shrine within the temple. On his death without an heir in 1855, the Thanjavur kingdom was annexed by the British. But female members of Shivaji II's family, and their successors, continued to support Brihadiswara and other temples in the region. One of Shivaji II's widows, Kamakshi Bai Saheb, repaired the Nataraja icon in 1884, and also commissioned a deer *vahana* in 1881 (Michell and Peterson 2010: 35-39).

GANGAIKONDACHOLAPURAM

The city of Gangaikondacholapuram (Tiruchi district, Tamil Nadu) was founded by Rajendra I, son and successor of Rajaraja I through his queen Vanavanmadevi (a Chera princess, also known as Tribhuvanamadevi). The city was built to commemorate his victorious march to the Ganges, in celebration of which Rajendra assumed the title Gangaikonda Chola, a name he also gave to his new capital (Gangaikondacholapuram), and the grand temple he built there. His Tiruvalankadu copper plates recorded the expedition to the Gangetic plains to bring the holy waters, after he had crushed all his enemies up to Bengal,[13]

> Mocking Bhagiratha who by the force of his austerities caused the descent of the Ganga, Rajendra, Light of the Solar race, set out to sanctify his own land with the waters of that stream brought by the strength of his arm... (Dehejia 1990: 79).

Rajendra himself went to the banks of the Godavari to receive his victorious army, which brought the Ganges water in golden vessels, carried on the heads of the vanquished rulers. He created a vast artificial lake, a "Liquid Pillar of Victory," into which the Ganga waters were poured, and named it Chola-Ganga, the Ganga of the Cholas. Nothing remains of his great fortified capital along the lake, due to centuries of pilferage of its bricks. An inscription mentioned that the outer fortification was called *Rajendra Cholan Madil*, after the Emperor. Besides the names of the palace and fort walls, the names of some streets were preserved in epigraphs (Nagaswamy 1970: 14).

The temple, which was similar to the one at Tanjore, was the only structure in the city built of stone. It ranked next to Brihadiswara in its monumental nature and surpassed it in sculptural quality. It rose to a height of 160 feet, and could be seen from about a distance of six-seven miles. None of the shrines now had the image of a deity (Nagaswamy 1970: 1, 17-18). The *linga* at Gangaikondacholapuram, thirteen feet high, is the tallest in south India. The temple appeared to have been completed by 1035 CE (Dehejia 1990: 79-80; Nagaswamy 1970: 23).

All the dwelling places in the city were constructed of mud and bricks. The royal palace was built at Utkottai, about one and a half km from the temple, where even now there was a mound called *Maalikai Medu* (palace mound). Contemporary works, like the *Muvar Ula* and the *Kalingattupparani*, described the city and palace (Vasanthi 2009: 97).

As the Chola capital for about 250 years from 1025 CE on, Gangaikondacholapuram controlled affairs from Tungabhadra in the north to Ceylon in the south. The first Chola king to be crowned at Gangaikondacholapuram was Rajakesari Rajadhiraja I (probably identified with Sundara Chola Pandya), the eldest son of Rajendra I. He attacked the Chalukyas and brought back from their capital, Kalyanapura, several sculptures of exceptional beauty (Nagaswamy 1970: 8).

An interesting inscription in the Gangaikondacholapuram temple gave the *prasasti* of a Gahadavala king of Kanauj, possibly Madanpala or his son Govindachandra. It seemed to indicate some link between the Cholas and the Gahadavalas (Nagaswamy 1970: 9-10).

The last great Chola ruler was Kulottunga III. An inscription of the Pandya ruler Jatavarman Sundara, dated 1252, was found at Gangaikondacholapuram; he seemed to have captured the city from weak Chola rulers. In 1310 CE, the Tamil country was invaded by Malik Kafur. Pandya hold on Gangaikondacholapuram weakened, though they retained nominal control (Nagaswamy 1970: 10-11).

In 1365, the Vijayanagara prince Kampana marched as far as Ramesvaram and brought the southern country under his control. There were no records of any Vijayanagara ruler at Gangaikondacholapuram till 1463 CE, nearly a hundred years after Kampana's conquest. Inscriptions of the fifteenth century attested that Gangaikondacholapuram was part of the Vijayanagara Empire. In the early sixteenth century, it came under the control of a *poligar*, a local chieftain, who functioned as a subordinate of Vijayanagara. After the fall of Vijayanagara, the *poligars* retained their position in the area. In the eighteenth century, during the English-French conflict, Gangaikondacholapuram suffered great damage. The greatest harm was inflicted in 1836, when a dam was erected across the Collidam, about seven miles from the temple. For the supply of stones for its construction, the public works department pulled down the enclosure walls, the dilapidated *gopura*, and the great *mandapa* (Nagaswamy 1970: 11-12).

Indian Antiquary IV: 274 carried an account that had been published in a local magazine of 1855,

> Speaking of the noble temple of Gangaikondacholapuram it must not be omitted that when the lower Kolerun *anikat*

was built, the structure was dismantled of a large part of the splendid granite sculptures which adorned it and the enclosing wall was almost wholly destroyed in order to obtain materials for the work. The poor people did their utmost to prevent this destruction and spoliation of a venerated edifice by the servants of a government that could show no title to it; but of course without success; they were only punished for contempt. A promise was made indeed that a wall of brick should be built in place of the stone wall that was pulled down; but unhappily it must be recorded that this promise has never been redeemed (Nagaswamy 1970: 12).

NOTES

1. Despite its shortcomings, the *Koil Olugu* or Temple Record was the most reliable primary source for the history of Sriranganatha temple. It was compiled by successive generations of Vaishnava *acharyas*. In its present form, the chronicle dated to 1803, when the British Collector, John Wallace requested the temple authorities to prepare a single coherent account from the surviving fragmentary manuscripts. Contemporary inscriptions validate most of what is written in the *Koil Olugu*. The chronicle constituted the "institutional memory" of the Srirangam temple (Spencer 1978: 15). Ramanuja, traditionally believed to be in charge of the Srirangam temple for a considerable period, was not mentioned in any temple inscription (Rao 1976: 2).
2. According to 162 of 1936-37 pt. II, para 51, the temple of Posalesvra Udaiyanar, which had turned into a mosque by the *Tulukkar*, was re-consecrated by Kampana in the course of his victorious campaign.
3. Works like *Jaimini Bharatam*, *Saluvabhyudayam*, and *Ramabhyudayam* described the restoration and re-consecration of the Srirangam temple. *Saluvabhyudayam* by Rajanatha Dindima gave important information about Saluva Mangu, his expedition against the Sultan of Madura, and his splendid gift of 1000 *salagrams* and eight villages to the Srirangam temple. *Ramabhyudaya*, a poem composed by Saluva

Narasimha, described the exploits of his ancestor, Saluva Mangu.

4. The Minakshi temple consisted of two separate sanctuaries, one for the goddess (*amman koyil*) and the other for Shiva (*svami koyil*). Both had the same basic design. The sanctum of Minakshi had the immovable image (*mula murti*), made of green stone while Sundareshvara's sanctum had the main *linga*. Minakshi's *utsavmaurti* showed her standing alone like her immovable image, but Sundareshvara's was a Somaskanda image. The temple also included a large tank. In the eastern part of the temple complex, were several large, pillared halls (*mandapas*), including the famous thousand-pillared hall. The temple's most remarkable feature were the twelve gateways (*gopuras*); the four highest were each about fifty metres tall and could be seen from a great distance (Michell 1993: 99-101).
5. Inscriptions engraved on the inner *gopura* in Saka 1714 recorded that a regiment of Europeans destroyed the Sokkanatha temple as well as the temple of Palaniandavar, seized the town, took over the *asthana-mandapa*, broke the gates of the *aksha-gopura*, and were approaching the *kalyana-mandapa*. The *bhattara* or priests seeing that the town and its gods would be destroyed, asked one Kutti to ascend the tower and jump down. The regiment went away as soon as he fell; the priests gave a document of his sacrifice whereby his descendants would enjoy certain lands in perpetuity. A mosque was constructed near the temple, and the Muslims claimed the place as their own (Ayyar 1993: 490-491).
6. The inscription dated 1723 CE was the last in the temple. Kanchi was sacked by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1742. During the Carnatic Wars, it was raided by both the French and English. The latter, under Clive, captured a considerable area including Kanchi on behalf of Muhammad Ali, the Nawab of the Carnatic (Raman 1975: 38).
7. Attan Jiyar alias Srinivasadasa was a relative of Akkanna and Madanna, and seemed to have come to Kanchi after Aurangzeb's attack on Golconda. A copper plate grant dated S 1636 (1714-15 CE), mentioned him as a guru of Raja Todarmalla. Raja Todarmalla served as general under

Sadatullah Khan, the Nawab of Carnatic (r.1710-1732), and played an important role in the capture of Ginjee. The *Ballad of Raja Desing*, a folk song of south India, extolled the gallantry of the young Rajput ruler of Gingee, who defied the Nawab of Carnatic, and whose wife immolated herself after his death in the battle (Srinivasachari 1943: 412-418). It was in the time of Sadatullah Khan, and his nephew and successor Dost Ali, that the images were restored in 1710 CE.

8. Lionel Place, Collector of 'Jaghir' from 1794-98, spent considerable sums on the restoration of the Varadaraja temple. He noted it "had been robbed of its most ornamental Pillars and other sculptural work" by Muslims to build a mosque. He said if the mosque had not been in a state of ruin "I should have thought it a commendable act of retributive justice to have restored them [the pillars] to their original place [by destroying the mosque]". He noted that the temple had on occasions been used by Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan during the war of 1780. He recorded that the "central dome under which the sacred idol was deposited had almost to be rebuilt." Further, the fires that had been lit in the temple had damaged sections made of granite and the floors had been ripped open by the Haider Ali's army in search of temple treasures believed to be hidden there (Irschick 1994: 79-81).
9. Dr. R. Nagaswamy highlighted the use of the Agams in the construction of temples in South India. In the case of the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi, he showed that two architectural treatises, the *Agama Pramana* and *Agamanusari,* were inscribed at the base of the temple, indicating their role in its construction (Nagaswamy 1969).
10. The trustees of the Govindaraja shrine told scholar B. Natarajan that the Govindaraja image which had been taken to Lower Tirupati had stayed there, and a new image was consecrated in the time of Achyuta Raya in the present Govindaraja shrine at Chidambaram. It appeared from inscriptions (Nos. 546 and 548 of 1918) that to build a *vimana* in front of the Govindaraja shrine and to provide a separate entrance to that shrine, an old Chola wall was broken. ARE I 1915 (AD 1538) refers to the 're-consecration of Govindarajasvamin at Citrakudam by Achyuta Raya' (Natarajan 1994: 166-167).

11. Among the bronzes gifted to the temple were images of Rajaraja and his chief queen, Lokamahadevi. A bronze image of Rajaraja presently under worship at the temple, was examined by T.G. Aravamuthan of Madras Museum in 1925. He discovered that its height did not match that mentioned in Rajaraja's inscription. He concluded that the bronze was not original, and was perhaps installed later to preserve the memory of the temple's founder. The lost bronzes, Rajaraja and Lokamahadevi, were never found. K. Balasubramaniyam suggested that two images in the Gautam Sarabhai collection, traditionally assigned to the twelfth century, were the missing bronzes. Dr. Nagaswamy examined the statues and dated them to the eleventh century (Nagaswamy 2006). Vidya Dehejia did not accept them as the royal portraits commissioned in 1010 CE (Dehejia 1990: 73-76). In May 2018, the Idol Wing of Tamil Nadu brought back the two bronzes from the Gautam Sarabhai Museum.
12. As per the inscription, around 850 persons were employed by the temple, of whom 467 were women and musicians. The names and original place of employment of 400 temple women were recorded in the inscriptions. The women were to serve under the guidance of six specially appointed dance masters. Fifty-three of the women hailed from Tiruvarur. Their houses in specific streets adjacent to the temple were also mentioned. Each woman was to be paid 100 *kalams* of paddy every year. The remaining 383 employees included temple administrators, many of them high-ranking military and civil officers; accountants, treasurers, and the like. There were additionally functionaries like parasol-holders, lamp-bearers, lamp-lighters, astrologers, goldsmiths and gem-appraisers, garland-makers, cooks, carpenters, braziers, engravers, washer men, and tailors. As many as 369 places, mostly in the Chola heartland, but also in the furthest corners of Rajaraja's kingdom were involved the providing various kinds of services to the temple (Michell and Peterson 2010: 23).
13. Almost a thousand years before Rajendra, the Chera king, Senguttuvan was believed to have marched to the Himalayas to bring a stone to carve an image of Goddess Pattini, which he enshrined in a specially constructed temple. The incident

was narrated in the *Silappadhikaram,* though scholars have doubted its authenticity. An obscure Karnata chief followed the Chola armies and settled in West Bengal. His descendants founded the Sena dynasty that later ruled Bengal.

14

Vijayanagara, Tirupati, Guruvayur

VIJAYANAGARA

DHARMA STANDS ON ONE LEG

Traditionally, the founding of the Vijayanagara Empire was interpreted as the reaffirmation of Hindu *dharma* in the face of the challenge from Islam. An interesting inscription (No. 5 from Bennur, dated 1347 CE) stated that the divine cow, Kamadhenu complained to Shiva that is was very difficult to walk on one leg, as it no longer had all four. That was a proclamation that only a semblance of *dharma* remained. Shiva recognized the gravity of the situation and said he would send king Sangama, and *dharma* would stand firmly again. The inscription was a declaration that Vijayanagara was founded to re-instate *dharma* (Ritti 2017: li).

Foreign Visitors Overcome by its Splendour

Many foreigners visited Vijayanagara, and wrote of its sheer splendour. The Portuguese, Tome Pires who came to study Indian medicine, described the kingdom as "large and very important ...With the exception of the kingdom of Delhi, this is the largest province in these parts, and they say, in India" (Filliozat 2001: 297). Abdur Razzak, Persian ambassador to the court of Devaraya II in 1443 CE, stated,

> The city of Bidjanagar is such that the pupil of the eye has never seen a place like it, and the ear of intelligence has never been informed that there existed anything to equal it in the world (Major 1992: 23-24).

Venetian merchant, Nicolo Conti in the early fifteenth century observed, "Their king is more powerful than all the other kings of India" (Major 1992: 6). The Italian traveller, Ludovico Di Varthema detailed the military might of Vijayanagara (Filliozat 2001: 285-286).The most extensive accounts of the kingdom were provided by Portuguese travellers, Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz, who arrived in the first half of the sixteenth century (Sewell 1977).

A KRISHNA IMAGE FROM UDAYAGIRI

Krishnadeva Raya, undoubtedly the greatest of Vijayanagara kings (Pl. 51), was said to have constructed the Krishna temple in 1515 CE to commemorate his victory over the Gajapati ruler, Prataparudra at Udayagiri, and to instate a stone image of Balakrishna he had acquired from a temple there (Pl. 52).[1] Domingo Paes, who visited the kingdom during his reign, wrote of Krishnapura, where the temple was located,

> And on the north-west side (of Bisnaga) is another city called Crisnapor connected with Bisnaga, in which are all their pagodas, those in which they most worship, and all the revenue of this city is granted to them; and they say that they have a revenue of a hundred thousand pardaos of gold. The pagodas are high, and have great buildings with many figures of men and women ... (Sewell 1977: 69).

A.H. Longhurst (1876-1955), Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey of India, Southern Circle, found a severely mutilated image of Krishna in a corner of the shrine, where it had been thrown either by Muslim soldiers or treasure-seekers (Longhurst 2010: 96). The icon, now in the Government Museum, Chennai, depicted baby Krishna seated on a pedestal with his right foot resting on a lotus flower (Pl. 53). The arms were missing, but in all likelihood there was a butter ball in the right hand, while the left hand was placed on the left thigh. The image, including the pedestal, was about one metre in height. It originally stood on a large detached stone *pitha*. At the consecration ceremony, Krishnadeva Raya presented the deity gold and silver vessels and the income of nine villages for its daily worship (*South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. IV: 44-50). The Madhava saint and royal preceptor, Vyasaraya composed hymns in honour of the arrival of the deity in Vijayanagara (Sastri and Venkataramanayya Vol. I 1946: 203).

Vasundhara Filliozat was perhaps the first to suggest that the Krishna image brought from Udayagiri was not installed in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Rather, it was consecrated, either in the small shrine on the wall of which inscriptions about the deity were engraved, or in a separate *mandapa*, especially made for it. She argued that the Krishna temple, with an image in the *garbha-griha*, existed well before the arrival of the deity from Udayagiri. Further, the Udayagiri image was, in all probability, an *utsav murti* (processional deity) and not a *mula murti* (stationary deity). She regarded the Krishna image in Madras Museum as the *Dhruva bera* (main deity), and a Vijayanagara icon (Filliozat 1985: 312).

In fact, Krishnadeva Raya's inscriptions in the temple (*South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. IV 1986: Nos. 254, 255: 44-50) clearly stated that the image of Balakrishna was installed in the *mani mandapa*. That could have been a new, especially built pavilion for the Udayagiri image (Ritti 2017: xlix-li). More recently, Dr. S.V. Padigar identified a jewelled *mandapa* (*mani mandapa*) adjacent to the *garbha griha* as the place where the deity from Orissa was instated (Padigar 2015 Vol. VI: 93-94). There was now no trace of the image brought from Udayagiri. Also missing was the *murti* of Krishna's consort in the temple. As per the epigraphic evidence, she was called Lakshmi and provisions were made for her worship (*South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. IV no. 255; Verghese 1995: 57).

Goddesses Missing and Displaced

Vasundhara Filliozat also pointed out that the present image of goddess Pampa in the Virupaksha shrine was not the original one. It did not match the description of the deity in the *Virupaksavasantotsava Campu*. The *Campu* stated that the goddess was seated on a *pitha*, whereas the present image was standing. The image of Bhuvanesvari in a shrine adjacent to Pampa was also not original. The shrine was earlier dedicated to Cikka Pampa or Bala Pampa (Filliozat 1985: 312-313).

There was currently a small image of Durga with more than six hands in the western corridor of the Virupaksha temple. Domingo Paes wrote of an image of Durga in that temple,

> At the back of the temple outside, close to the verandahs of which I have spoken, there is a small idol of white alabaster with six arms; in one it has a ... [word omitted in the original text], and in the other a sword, and in the others sacred emblems, and it has below its feet a buffalo, and a large animal which is helping it to kill the buffalo (Sewell 1900: 261-262).

The present image did not match the description provided by Paes. However, a statue of Durga slaying the demon was found in the Lakshmi temple at Pampasaras, near Anegondi, on the northern bank of the Tungabhadra River. The image had only four arms now, but traces of the other two were visible. During the catastrophic events of 1565, many images were taken to Anegondi for safety (Pl. 54). Filliozat speculated that the image of Durga remained at Pampasaras after the battle of Talikota. Filliozat described the image as characteristic of the time of Krishnadeva Raya (Filliozat 1985: 312-313).

VITTHAL TEMPLE AND ITS IMAGE

The Vitthal temple was rated as "perhaps the most magnificent monument" in the city of Vijayanagara (Aiyangar 1936: 21).[2] Domingo Paes wrote of the temple, "Outside the city walls on the north there are three very beautiful pagodas one of which is called Vitella (the Vitthal temple)..." (Filliozat 2001: 112-120).

Vitthal was a popular deity in Karnataka in pre-Vijayanagara times, and temples dedicated to him were built at several places, one of which was mentioned in an inscription from Shimoga district dated 1216 CE. The Vitthal cult became widespread in Vijayanagara in the sixteenth century. The earliest extant representation of the deity was possibly in the Ramachandra temple complex, where a relief of Vitthal could be seen on a pillar in each of the three porches of the *ranga-mandapa*. From then on, there were carvings of Vitthal on pillars in Vaishnava temples, and sometimes also in Shaiva shrines (Verghese 1995: 60-61).

The Vitthal temple was not constructed at one go (Verghese 2000: 170-186). The first patron of the temple was not known, but an early structure seemed to date from the fifteenth century. Many rulers added structures to the temple. There were over thirty inscriptions in and around the Vitthal complex, the largest in any one temple. The inscriptions of Krishnadeva Raya were in the three principal languages of the empire – Kannada, Telugu, and Tamil. The list of donors established the extensive patronage the cult enjoyed. Among them were Krishnadeva Raya; Achyuta Raya; Bouganna, a boatman from Anegondi (1531); Talapaka Tirumalayya, a member of a leading Sri Vaishnava family that was prominent at Tirupati and Ahobalam (in 1532); besides several officers, saints, and others. The last grant was made in November 1564, a year before the sack of the city (Verghese 1995: 61-62, 64).

Though it was generally assumed that there was just one Vitthal temple in Vijayanagara city, two recently discovered inscriptions revealed another temple of the deity in the "sacred centre." It was known as the *Prata* (or old) Vitthal temple, and probably existed well before the Vitthal temple. Presently, that temple was known as Hastagiri Ranganatha-svami temple, and had an image of Ranganatha. The exact date of the construction of the Prata Vitthal temple could not be determined (Verghese 1995: 60-61).

WHERE DID THE VITTHAL *MURTI* COME FROM?

Where did the *mula-murti* of Vitthal in Vijayanagar originate? N. Venkataramanayya argued that it was brought from Tirumala-Tirupati, and cited a *sankirtana* by Tallapakam Annamacharya (1408-1503 CE), "Vitthala scatters his boons in every quarter of the city of Vijayanagara. Having come from the holy Venkata hill, Vitthala and Rukmini reside in their temple." According to N. Venkataramanayya, Tirumala-Tirupati was a centre of the Vitthal cult, from where the image travelled to Vijayanagara.

However, it has been pointed out that the earliest shrine at Tirupati dedicated to Vitthal dated to 1546 CE, when Udayagiri Devaraya Bhattar installed an image of Vitthalesvara-svami in the Hanuman temple. Several inscriptions of 1547 CE referred to that newly installed deity. The Vitthal cult was prevalent in Vijayanagara by the reign of Sadasiva Raya (1542-1570). That made it unlikely that the image came to Vijayanagara from Tirumala-Tirupati. Also, the consort of Vithoba in Vijayanagara was clearly named Lakshmi, not Rukmini, which rendered the historical accuracy of the *sankirtana* doubtful (Verghese 1995: 61).[3]

A belief widespread in Maharashtra was that when Pandharpur was confronted with a Muslim threat, Krishnadeva Raya took the image for its security, and it was returned in safer times (Ranade 1933: 213-214).[4] Bhanudas (1448-1513), the great grandfather of Eknath, was said to have gone to Vijayanagara to retrieve the image in the reign of Sadasiva Raya (Zelliot 1987: 94; Khare 1936: 191). The king was moved by his devotion. The image was respectfully placed on a decorated palanquin, and a huge procession of devotees escorted it back to Pandharpur. When the image arrived on *ekadashi*, "saints, Vaishnavas and pilgrims all felt the joy of the occasion" (*Bhaktavijaya* 1926: 48). Passages from Bhanudas's own compositions and the work of saints like Vadirajatirtha and Shrida-Vitthal partly endorsed that account (Mate 1988: 193-195).

In the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, four Marathi writers narrated the story of the Pandharpur image:

1. Vitthalakavi of Bid, who lived around 1679 CE
2. Kesavasvami, who was certainly alive in 1682 CE
3. Mahipati, who wrote the *Bhaktavijaya* and the *Bhaktalilamrta* in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, and
4. Bhimasvamin who lived in about 1798 CE (Khare 1936: 191).

Though Bhanudas's dates were uncertain, he was believed to have been born around 1448 CE and died in about 1513. Those dates did not match with the reign of Sadasiva Raya (1543-1565) and his regent, Rama Raya (Khare 1936: 193). The Annual Report of ASI on the Vitthal temple stated,

> It was begun by Krishnadevaraya in 1513 and the work was carried on by his successors Achyuta and Sadasiva. However the temple was apparently never finished or consecrated. In all probability the work was stopped by the destruction of the city in 1565.

The Report referred to a tradition,

> But the God having come to look at it (the temple) refused to move, saying that it was far too grand for him and he preferred his own humble home (ASIAR 1922-23: 67).

According to the ASI report, the temple was never completed and no image was instated. However, inscriptions about the temple dated from Saka 1435 to 1486 (1513-1564 CE), confirmed that during those years there was an image in the Vitthal temple, which was worshipped with "all pomp, show and magnificence," whether the temple was completed or not. In Saka 1442-43 (1520-21 CE), there was a battle between Krishnadeva Raya and the Sultan of Bijapur, Ismail Adil Shah in which the latter was defeated. It was possible that Krishnadeva removed Vitthal from Pandharpur at that time (Khare 1936: 193-194).

Some evidence of such a probability was provided by Vadirajatirtha, a Madhva saint almost contemporary of Krishnadeva. In his work *Teertha Prabandha,* composed around Saka 1493 (1571 CE), he clearly stated that Vitthal had gone to the banks of Tungabhadra,

> O Vittlal! ... Having put on a different appearance, you came here to the banks of *tunga*... (*Teertha Prabandha* 2017).

The verse said Vitthal went to Tungabhadra in another form. That could mean the Vijayanagara Vitthal was different from the one at Pandharpur. The Vitthal temple was particularly ravaged after the battle of Talikota in 1565 (Filliozat 1977: 5). The original Vitthal image was possibly destroyed, and Vadirajatirtha could be referring to a new image subsequently installed there. G.H. Khare was of the view that while there was every possibility that Krishnadeva brought the image from Pandharpur, there was little likelihood of it having gone back (Khare 1936: 194-195).[5]

TIRUPATI:
THE HOLY VENGADAM

Tirumala hill (Vengadam) contained seven peaks, representing the seven hoods of Adisesa (the king of Nagas on whom Vishnu was often depicted resting). Sri Venkateshwara resided on the seventh range, the Venkatacala, from which he received the name Venkateshwara (Pl. 55). His temple was generally called Tirumala (the Sacred Hill or Upper Tirupati).

Venkatesh of Tirumala hill shared several similarities with Vitthal of Pandharpur. R.C. Dhere suggested that the original source of both Venkatesh and Vitthal was Vitthal-Birappa, the dual god of the Gavli, Dhangar, and Kuruba pastoralists. The Tamil poet saints, the Alvars knew of Vengadam as a place frequented by the Kurubas. Their hymns contained numerous references to Kurubas living in the area, hunting elephants, and also farming when possible.

The Alvars were Vishnu devotees, but often called Venkateshwara a combined form of Hari and Hara (Vishnu and Shiva), or of Hari, Hara, and Brahma. No Alvar referred to the temple at Tirupati or to the characteristics of the image. They only sang of the greatness of the holy Vengadam and the supreme object of their devotion, who dwelt there in the open. They provided no realistic description of the deity (Dhere 2011: 56-59).

The earliest inscription in the Tirumala temple referred to the birth of the Bana prince, Vijayaditya Mahavali Banaraya, a feudatory of the Pallava king, Vijaya Dantivikrama Varman in the first half of the ninth century CE. He made a gift to Venkateshwara at Tiruchanur (an early location of the temple) (Sastry 2014: 81, 103-104; Ramesan 2009: 44-56, 231-232). In 970 CE, Samavai, wife of a Pallava subordinate of the Cholas, consecrated a silver image, *Manavala Perumal*, in the temple, which was a replica of the original deity (*Dhruva Bera*, the stationary central image). That was perhaps the first representative image of Venkateshwara, adorned with jewels and ornaments. Samavai also instituted several festivals at the temple.

Over a thousand inscriptions at the Tirumala temple and its neighbourhood recorded gifts made by kings of the Pallava, Chola, Pandya, Yadavaraya, and Vijayanagara dynasties. The Vijayanagara rulers afforded protection and patronage to temples after the chaos of the preceding centuries. Seven visits of Krishnadeva Raya to Tirupati were recorded; he also dedicated his work, *Amuktamalyada* to Venkateshwara. Almost eighty-five inscriptions at the temple pertained to his reign (Ramesan 2009: 31-32, 56-81; Sastry 2014: 210-233). Copper statues of the King and his two Queens were placed at the temple entrance. Krishnadeva Raya's half-brother and successor, Achyuta Raya even had his coronation ceremony performed there. He was mentioned in several inscriptions as a generous benefactor, and thrice visited the temple (Sastry 2014: 234-253). Statues of him and his queen were also found in the temple. The *Venkatachala Mahatmyam*, composed in the fifteenth century, narrated many legends connected with the temple (Ramesan 2009: 174-200).

Royal personages, religious leaders, and others inaugurated numerous festivals at Tirupati. Offerings were also made to the processional images while seated on a swing in the stone car. Lingasani and Tiruvenkata manikyam, daughters of a temple *dasi* Tiruvenkatadasi, made an offering in February 1545 to all the processional deities while seated on the swing (Ramesan 2009: 22, 32, 71-75, 122-123, 233-234; Sastry 2014: 84-85, 90,101).

The *Venkatacala-Itihasa-Mala*, a Sanskrit text composed by Anantarya, a direct disciple of Ramanuja, in the twelfth century, described a dispute between the Shaivas and Ramanuja about whether the image of Venkateshwara was of Shiva (or a Saiva deity) or Vishnu. The debate was conducted in the presence of a local Yadava king. Ramanuja worsted the Shaivas in the debate. The king was convinced of the accuracy of Ramanuja's arguments, but Ramanuja called on Venkatesh to declare his own form. However, the basic features of the image appeared to have been mostly Shaiva, with Vaishnava attributes added later on (Dhere 2011: 56-59, 65-66).

INVASIONS FROM THE NORTH

Malik Kafur's first attack on the Andhra country in 1303 CE was repulsed. In his second invasion of 1309, he defeated the Kakatiya ruler, Prataparudradeva. The Tirumala-Tirupati region was unharmed as the invader took a south-western route back home, and did not march south from Warangal through the heart of Andhra country. The first attack of Ulugh Khan on the Andhra region in 1321 CE was also repelled. But a second attack in 1323 caught the Kakatiya ruler by surprise, and ended in his defeat. After his victory at Warangal, Ulugh Khan marched through Cuddapah and Kurnool, and went to districts farther south. He too marched in the south-western direction, and conquered the Mabar region. He returned to Delhi through the coastal districts of Andhra and Orissa. The Tirumala-Tirupati region escaped destruction a second time (Ramesan 2009: 27-28).

SRI RANGANATHA SEEKS SHELTER AT TIRUPATI

Not all temples were as fortunate. In the south-east corner of the courtyard of the Tirupati temple was a big *mandapa,* popularly known as Ranga Mandapa. There was a small shrine at its end, now permanently locked. The *utsava murti* of Ranganatha was sheltered there when the Sri Ranganatha temple was attacked by the Delhi armies. Ranga Mandapa was said to have been constructed between 1320 and 1360 CE by the Yadava ruler, Sri Ranganatha Yadava Raya, though that was not corroborated by any epigraphic evidence. Stylistically the mandapa was typically Vijayanagara, with even the Vijayanagara royal crest of Varaha carved on the pillars (Ramesan 2009: 86-87; Sastry 2014: 85). As Ranganatha was an honoured guest, *Tiruvaradana* (*puja* and food-offering) was first conducted for him, and certain *prabandas* he cherished were recited in the presence of Venkateshwara.

Gopana, a Brahmin general of the Vijayanagara prince Kampana and governor of Ginji, on a pilgrimage to Tirumala, saw the image of Ranganatha. With the permission of the temple priests, he took the image first to Ginji, and then reinstated it at Srirangam.

Ramanuja and the Image of Govindaraja

The Acharyas, who came after the Alvars, gave a distinct form to Vaishnavism. The first of them, Nadamuni who restored the practice of reciting Tamil *Prabandham* in temples, visited Tirumala in the course of a pilgrimage. Acharya Alavandar also stayed at the temple, and directed his grandson, Tirumalai Nambi to reside on the hill and serve the deity. Ramanuja was said to have come to Tirupati thrice. According to *Sri Venkatachala-Itihasa mala*, on the first occasion, Ramanuja spent about a year with his uncle, Tirumalai Nambi learning the esoteric meaning of the *Ramayana*. During his second visit, he settled the dispute between the Shaivites and Vaishnavites on the nature of the image at Tirumala (Sastry 2014: 94-95). On his last visit, when he was 102 years old, he installed the image of Govindaraja at a temple he constructed. Though there was no definite reference to support that, popular belief attributed the instatement of the Govindaraja image to Ramanuja, after the death of Kulottunga in 1120 CE (Ramesan 2009: 22, 343-347; Sastry 2014: 145-146).

The image of Govindaraja retrieved from the sea was a small processional image about two feet high. To fulfil the requirements of a big central image of the temple, it was placed in a laying posture leaning on one side and plastered to a length of about five-six feet with commensurate bodily proportions, along with the deities Lakshmi and Brahma, and the Vaishnava saints. That transformed it into a large central image (Sastry 2014: 145-146)

The earliest inscription at the Govindaraja shrine was dated in the 19th regnal year of Rajaraja Chola III, i.e. 1235 CE. It referred to the instatement sometime earlier of an image of Sri Tirumangaiyalvar in the Govindaraja temple, and provisions made for daily food offering by members of the Periya-*nattavar*. That implied the Govindaraja shrine could have been constructed as late as the beginning of the thirteenth century, before 1235 CE which was the date of the inscription. Sri Tirumangaiylvar's installation could have taken place four-five years prior to that date, i.e. in about 1230 CE (Sastry 2014: 145, 148-150).

The Govindaraja image could have been installed in a separate shrine in the Sri Parthasarathi temple now called Sri Govindaraja Perumal temple. Presently, the Parthasarathi image was covered, and the shrine closed as the image was said to have been damaged. When and how that happened was not known. If it happened prior to the installation of Govindaraja, the Parthasarathi image could have been removed and Govindaraja instated in that shrine itself, without the need to construct a new temple (Ramesan 2009: 59, 235).

There was an abandoned big blue stone image of Govindaraja on the *bund* of a fresh water tank, called Narasimha-*tirtham*, west of Tirupati. It was about eight feet in length from the crown to the pedestal. According to common belief, it was originally worshipped in the Govindaraja temple, and when disfigured, was placed on the tank *bund*. It was not certain when the damage occurred. The present small idol which was plastered and brought from the sea near Chidambaram might have been its substitute. The inscriptions at Tirupati did not refer to it, except for a passing reference in No. 40 that the image of Govindaraja was a plastic one. The damage to the huge Govindaraja idol could have been caused any of the Muslim attacks on the south (Sastry 2014: 148-150).

There were four copper images of Sri Rama, Sita, Sugriva, and Lakshman in the sanctum sanctorum. The image of Sri Rama was said to have been brought for safety from Madura by a Sri Vaishnava, and presented to Ramanuja when he was receiving lessons from Tirumalai Nambi (Ramesan 2009: 125; Sastry 2014: 111).

The claim that Ramanuja consecrated the image of Govindaraja at Tirupati was questioned by Dr. Nagaswamy.[6] He pointed out that the earliest reference to Ramanuja at Tirupati occurred in the reign of Vijaya Ganda Gopala, a Telugu Chola ruler who came to the throne at Kanchi around 1250 CE and ruled till 1291. That inscription was on the east wall of the first *gopura*, and recorded the gift of 500 *Varahan panams*, with which land was purchased for making a flower garden and provisions for food offerings. It mentioned Ramanuja in one line and Emperuman in another. In all probability, Emperuman referred to Ramanuja, who was known as Emperumanar in the Vaishnava tradition. Though the inscription was dated in the reign of Vijaya Ganda Gopala, neither his regnal year nor the Saka era were provided, making it difficult to confirm the year precisely. It could be anywhere between 1250 and 1290 CE. The earliest record in the Varadaraja temple of Kanchi that mentioned the name of Ramanuja was of the year 1316 CE. If a few decades were given for the deification of Ramanuja, he most certainly died before 1200 CE. The traditional birth date of Ramanuja was 1017, and if he had lived for 120 years he might have died around 1137. That ruled out the possibility of his involvement in the Govindaraja episode (Nagaswamy 2008: 6-7).

TIRUPATI UNDER MUSLIM CONTROL

Though Tirupati twice escaped attack from the Sultanate forces, in the mid-seventeenth century the Tirumala-Tirupati region was conquered by the Sultans of Golconda, and remained under Muslim control for about a century and a half (1650-

1800). The situation in Tirupati following the invasion of Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah, which occurred around 1660-62, was described by an anonymous Telugu poet, who was an eye-witness to the events. His poem, *Sri Venkatachala Vihara Satakamu* (Descriptive catalogue – Telugu – item 1710), was addressed to the Lord of the Seven Hills. It was a centum of Telugu verses, of which 98 were available. It described the desecration of temples and destruction of images in Tirupati. The poet stated,

> ....When the Turks penetrated the temples and broke the idols into pieces, and annoyed the great religious teachers and licked the *namams* (upright caste-marks) and pulled the small tuft of hair of their heads, is it not possible for you to slay them? In my weakness I implore you... (Verse 5).

In Verse 7, he said that if a Brahmin like himself possessed a weapon like the Disc of Venkatesh, he would most certainly wield it ferociously to strike, pierce, kill men and horses to fall on each other as corpses, and drive the Turks up to Golconda. Verse 9 stated, "Your Arava (Tamil) ears which so long listened to the psalms of the Dravida-Grantha (Tamil-*Prabandha*) should not be closed to them is our anxiety", i.e. they should not be obliged to hear the Muslim lore instead of the Tamil *pasurams* of the Alvars.

Further he said,

> The *Kamkhana-ganamu* (the men under the commanders) and the superior force under the *Vajirs* of Golkonda dash the shaven heads of *sanyasis* against each other like the dashing of rams in a fight; split the *Brahma-sutramulu* (sacred threads) of *Somayajis* (persons who performed *Yajna* or sacrifice) and tie them as strings to their bows; mount the artificial horse-vehicles of the temple and goad them with huge cries; molest woman of the Komati (merchant) class, demanding money, ransom; in such a sad plight of the townsmen of Lower Tirupati, Your elder brother Tilla-Govindaraja is sleeping, and is unable to bestir Himself (Verse 15).

Tilla-Govindaraja is much aged and is an ancient Being and lacks strength of arm to wield the Disc; and on account of poverty of food, he pledged it; His *sargna* (bow) became rusty by non-usance; His sword was bored by beetles; His *Kaumodaki* (club) and *Pancajanya* (*sankha*) assumed depressions and hollows; and his servants became self-seekers and left Him, declaring that they did not want His unsalaried service. When He is thus enfeebled, is He capable of leading a campaign against the powerful *Yavana* provincial chiefs? (Verse 21).

The rusted brass and copper articles have been made into cannon balls, the *Salagramams* procurable from the Gandaki river for worship are used as bullets, the granite stone sculptured by the stone-mason has become a stepping stone; whether You noted these acts or not, such are the misdeeds of the Turks (Verse 16).

Can You not destroy the cavalry without feeling aversion to the destruction of the hill-side and save the 'Jirna-Karnata-Laksmi' (the prosperity of the crumbled Karnata or Vijayanagara Kingdom) (Verse 29) and cut off the heads with Your Disc of the *Vajirs* who are committing atrocities by piercing and stabbing men whereby blood gushes from the victims and flows in streams, and drive them up to the tank of Peruru village (about 3 miles to the west of Tirupati on the roadside) (Verse 30).

The western horsemen spurred their horses up the Hill and are firing volleys from their cannon and destroying men, appearing like the *Yavana-Kalantaka* (the Muslim Death-God) executing His work before the destined time; why do You not slay them, drive them down the Hill, vanquish them and wed the goddess of Victory (Verse 32).

They are stripping the gold plate off the entrance door under the tower in Your temple. Why do You not likewise peel their skin? The pleasant groves are filled with tombs, and no carriers of water for temple worship are present in the streets; only pots of arrack are seen, but no *kamandalams* (water-holder like a kettle) are to be found in the Mathas (monasteries), only vile language is heard, but not the holy scripture-reading in the houses; no daily worship and festivals are performed in temples, but only the neighing of the horses occurs; why do You forbear, without slaughtering the Pathan cavalry, while flesh is exposed in sandalwood groves in lines to dry, while all dirt is washed in the Varaha-Puskarini, and while Namaju feasts performed at the doorways of the Vaikhanasas (Verses 38 and 39).

How can I utter the 'Kartaru-mantra' of the Muslim, giving up the 'Gayatri-mantra' and remain sinfully with bare face devoid of the namam... How can I adore the Penugonda-Baba (the Nawab), discontinuing my prayers to You, the World-Father (Verse 66).

When the Turks assaulted Siddhavatam and massacred people and defaced Goddess Kamaksi, God Siddhalinga evacuated His body, and Cenna Kesavasvami of the same place drowned Himself in the Penna river, and other gods fled; and only Raghudvaha (Sri Rama) of Ontimitta stood in the place (Verse 69).

When previously the violent army consisting of manujaraksasas (men in appearance but raksasas, hideous in action) of Vijayapuri (Bijapur) invaded the southern kingdoms, subjugated them and appropriated them, Rajagopalamurti fled, showing His back to the base Yavana (Muslim); Kanci Varadappa (Varadaraja) began to tremble in fear of losing the diamond in His stomach-pit, the puisne Cengalvaraya (Narasimhasvami) God of Ghatikacala (Solingar) does not get down the hill; God of Srimusnam went underground, and the Deity of Tirukovaluru was shattered to pieces (Verse 70).

Our Mangalagirisami (Panakala-Narasimhasvami of Mangalagiri) is incessantly engaged in drinking potfulls of *Panakam* (jaggery-dissolved water) without interval; Ahobaladhyaksa Hari (Ahobala Narasimhasvami) is constantly sporting with Lacci (Laksmidevi) and cannot be

> diverted; Purusottama is ever inclined to consume *prasadams* (holy food) and lacks thought. Dharmapuri-guhasthanapati (Lord of Dharmapuri cave) revels in self-contemplation and these Deities already adopted *Islamism*, but You, being a solitary Southerner in the *Muslim* country, how can You put up with it (Verse 74).

The poet listed the towns and cities that had experienced "the fierce sword-handling army men of 'Suratani Abdula'" (the Sultan of Golkonda) previously (Verse 76-77). Then,

> Do the peaks of Your Hill intercept if the Turkish-army encircle Your Hill and thrash You? Is there any protector to You, if they fall on You and wrest the sabre from Your hand? Are there any guards to ward You, if they violently attempt to rob You of Your jewels? Will Your cry for help avail if they forcibly enter Your temple, reach Your bilamu (hole, cellar) and crush it? Alas! How can the sufferers of the south thrive without Your grace (Verse 79).

The poet continued,

> If you do not destroy the Turks, I shall not keep quiet; I will expose acts of secrecy of your earlier life. I have not forgotten them: your misdeeds of having stolen and swallowed butter, of having outraged the modesty of the married cowherdesses in Repalle, of the sin of having killed Putana who came to suckle you like a mother, and of your haughtiness in having incited your brother Balarama to strike with the Yamuna river without regard to Her old age (Verse 80).

In anger, he cried out,

> If You, who assumed the various Avataras of the Fish, Boar, Lion; the Three Ramas and so on, do not strike, pierce, cut, split and drive away the violent Vajirs, they will vanquish You (Verse 83).
>
> Do not call Yourself 'Srihari,' but designate yourself 'Mrityujahalli;' not 'Perumallu,' but 'Khoda;' not 'Vishnu,' but 'Kartaru;' not 'Krishna', but 'Babayya;' because the

> 'Dakkinul' (Dakkanis), Turks, 'Parasilu' (Persians), 'Tanakil' (men of tana or thana, military posts), will insult, abuse, stripe and cudgel you. I have pre-warned you out of gratitude, since I ate your food and enjoyed other benefits fully; and I have no other thought. Without being frightened by these horrible sights, try to escape early in good time (Verse 85).

Continuing in the same refrain, the poet prayed to Lord Venkateshwara,

> Only the old fame of your valour continues as the holder of the disc, but you are incapable of assailing the Turks; only the glamour of Lachchi (Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth) being your better half stays, but you are disinclined to forego even one pie of interest on money promised to you; only it is the word (People's idea) of your being the Supreme God, but you cannot bestow thousand and sixes on Your supplicants (Rs. 1116 is generally considered as a high gift; and the 1006 mentioned by the poet here is probably meant to indicate 1116 only); only the celebrity of your being gold-garmented stands, but your food is of unpounded rice alone; you do not allow your plates to be cleaned; so stingily you have accumulated money. If you intend paying this money to the Turks as ransom, will your bhaktas (devotees) trust you? I entreat you, as your well-wisher, not to pay money to the mean-minded... (Verse 90).

In Verse 91, the poet, who had till then only glorified the holy name of Venkatesh sanctified by Vedic flavour, and did not praise any human being, asked, "What shall I do henceforth?" Describing the situation in Tirupati, he stated,

> All formal restraints on the behaviour of men have vanished, and the Turks have violently surrounded Tirupati and are looting it (verse 94). Should you not strike the Turks who spoiled Your food-offerings, converted the thousand-pillared mantapa space into stables, made a gori (tomb, sepulchre) of your temple, for *Babayya* (a high Muslim officer); filled the garbhagrihamulu (sanctums) with filth, broke the

> idols, stole the sacred jewels, threw kitchen articles into disorder, struck the Nambis, hewed the bodies of the Jiyyangars, desecrated the surrounding tirumalighalu (mansions of the archakas and big men), and are robbing the people (Verse 95).

In conclusion, the poet profusely apologised to Venkateshwara,

> Arrogantly I called you a coward; you a supreme warrior; merciless; the ever-solicitous protector of bhaktas; appearing powerless but really the all-pervasive universal power of different forms inhering even in the smallest atom and the pores of hair; seemingly inactive, but really the illumine with self-effulgent and self-resplendent light. In my distressed mood, I blamed you with intent to exhort you for the good of the world to destroy the assailing Turks; I repentantly implore you to bear with my thousand offences (Verse 98) (Ramesan 2009: 421-424; Sastry 2014: 291-297).

THE LEGEND OF SRI VENKATESHWARA'S DEBT TO KUBERA

The *archakas* in that period invented a story that Venkateshwara had borrowed money from Kubera for his marriage to Padmavathi, and agreed to pay interest to him, through kings who held sway over the region, by levying fees on devotees for various *darshanams*, of value equal to the presents offered to the God. As a consequence, the shrine obtained an average income of 2 *lakh* rupees. The devotees, anxious to safeguard the institution from alien interference, gladly and liberally contributed funds to the temple. The Sultans of Golconda and their successors, the Nawabs of Carnatic, farmed out that revenue to Hindu renters, thus ensuring a steady and certain annual income. They were loath to forego such an abundant source of revenue by interfering with the shrine. The temple was saved by pandering to the greed of the conquerors. To make the story of the debt to Kubera appear credible, the temple authorities actually prepared a bond pertaining to the transaction, which was preserved to this day. The temple *archakas* thereby saved the shrine from ruin (Ramesan 2009: 426-427).

MARATHA LEADERS AT TIRUPATI

When Tirupati was under Muslim control, the mother and wife of Peshwa Baji Rao visited the temple in May 1740, as did Raghoji Bhonsle. The diarist, Ananda Ranga Pillai recorded that in 1743 officers of the Maratha contingent, Raja Chandra Sen and Raja Nimbali Siyudosi visited Tirupati at the head of 20,000 of their troops for worship (Aiyangar 1952: 266).

GURUVAYUR TEMPLE – KERALA

The Guruvayur temple, dedicated to Guruvayurappan (Krishna), began to be mentioned in official records in the late thirteenth century, with the ascendancy of the Samoothiri (which the British mispronounced as Zamorin). The Zamorins ruled from Kozhikode (Calicut) for almost five centuries, their kingdom comprising most of present central and northern Kerala. They were involved in a bitter struggle with the Vellatri rulers of Valluvanad. One cause of dispute was control of the area around Thirunavaya, an ancient temple dedicated to Vishnu on the northern bank of the Bharatapuzha River. The Zamorins wanted the right to conduct the prestigious Mamankam festival held near the temple once every twelve years. The Vellatris were eager to retain that privilege.

By the time the Zamorins emerged victorious, the war had dragged on for so long that the number of pilgrims visiting Thirunavaya had declined sharply. Many pilgrims, especially those from southern Kerala, began to visit Guruvayur, which greatly increased the temple's fame and income. Guruvayur gained further as the Zamorins acquired control of the area north of Guruvayur, which ensured safe passage to the temple. The Zamorins became staunch devotees of Vishnu. As a consequence of the enhanced offerings, additions were made to the temple: the eastern and western *gopurams* were constructed, the *kodi maram* ('flag tree') encased in gold, and in 1638, the sanctum rebuilt.

The Zamorin's wars with the Portuguese and Dutch brought Guruvayur directly into the theatre of war. In 1716, the Dutch, fighting the Zamorin, raided and desecrated the temple, looted its wealth, burnt the western *gopuram*, and even stripped the *kodi maram* of its gold. They came back four decades later. Though Guruvayur was spared, they ransacked the nearby Thikunavayi temple, of which Guruvayur was then subordinate. The priests of Thikunavayi fled and refused to return. The Thikunavayi *devaswom* was dissolved and the Zamorin became supervising trustee of Thikunavayi and Guruvayur, as well as their *Mel Koyma* or Sovereign Protector (Seth 2009: 29-31). Meanwhile, by the mid-eighteenth century, due to the Zamorin managing Guruvayur, permanent acrimony was created between him and Mallissery Namboothiripad, the temple's traditional owners.

HAIDER ALI ATTACKS MALABAR

Guruvayur was threatened in 1766, when Haider Ali of Mysore attacked Malabar. Haider Ali seized Calicut, and the Zamorin, unable to protect his kingdom and subjects, burnt his palace and perished with his family (Lewis 1898: 383-384). Haider Ali's troops reached Guruvayur, but temple was saved when a man, only known as Vatakkepat Warrier, paid 10,000 *panams*.

Pilgrims stopped visiting the temple; tenants ceased to pay land rents, and transportation of rice was no longer possible. In 1780, the temple was saved from complete ruin as Srinivasa Rao, Haider Ali's governor in Malabar, made a carefully worded request for the temple to be spared destruction, and granted a *devadaaya*, a gift of financial support to the deity (Seth 2009: 31).

Tipu Sultan Arrives – Images Hidden

Eight years later, Haider Ali's son and successor, Tipu Sultan came to Malabar determined to defeat the Zamorin and convert the population. Guruvayur feared total destruction. The deity of the Thriprayer Rama temple was shifted to Gnanappilly Mana, in a remote village. The Mammiyoor Shiva temple was destroyed by Tipu before he reached Guruvayur.

According to most accounts, the *moolavigraha*, Guruvayurappan's image was hidden in the temple, probably buried. The processional image, the *thidambu*, was taken to the Ambalapuzha Shree Krishna Temple in Travancore. On arrival, Tipu's army plundered the temple, destroyed the subsidiary shrines, and set fire to the complex. The temple was saved from complete destruction due to a heavy downpour, which extinguished the fire. In March 1792, the combined forces of the Zamorin and the British drove Tipu out of Malabar. By September, the *moolavigraha* was re-installed in the sanctum, and the *thidambu* brought back from Ambalapuzha.[7]

Though the temple survived, its resources were severely hit. Many of the temple's tenants had converted to Islam and refused to pay their rents; others had fled. The temple's rituals and festivals were further affected when Tipu Sultan confiscated Haider Ali's *devadaaya*. The Zamorins could not offer any assistance as in 1800, the year following the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan, the British declared Malabar a part of Madras Presidency (Seth 2009: 32).

The temple was saved once again, this time by one of Malabar's most illustrious families, the Ullanat Panickers. The Ullanat family traced its history back to a time when they were famous practitioners and teachers of the martial art of *kalaripayyattu*. Their expertise was such that two brothers and a sister were brought from their original home in the Tululand region of coastal Karnataka to train the soldiers of Nediyirippu Swarupam, a small principality that eventually became the nucleus of the Zamorin's realm. The kingdom was then under the Cheraman Perumals who ruled until perhaps the mid-ninth century. According to legend, the last Perumal was a great king who, after reigning for thirty-six years, converted to Islam, divided his kingdom among those who owed him allegiance, and departed for Mecca.

When the Perumal divided the kingdom, the Zamorin was not present. As a result, when he appeared before the Perumal, he received what was left: the Perumal's sword, a broken conch, a last piece of land (which later became Calicut), and his faithful servant, the Ullanat Panicker. From then on, as the Zamorin's power and territory increased, so too did the standing and wealth of the Ullanat family. The Ullanat Panickers looked after the interests of the Zamorin and the temple. For seventy-five years, from 1825 to 1900 they served the temple free, and used the wealth of their vast estates to ensure it survived (Seth 2009: 32).

NOTES

1. The Krishna temple was the first complete religious monument constructed entirely in the sixteenth century. It was one of the largest temple complexes in the city. Besides the shrines of the principal and subsidiary deities, it had arrangements for storing grain and other items for daily cooking of food offerings, *mandapas* for various festive ceremonies, a long chariot street for the *rathotasava*, and a tank for the floating festival (Verghese 1995: 58). The inscriptions in the temple (*South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. IV, nos. 254, 255) underlined its significance in the life of the city from the time of its construction till the battle of Talikota (Verghese 2000: 51, 80). A war scene depicted in stucco on the east *gopura* was likely of the Udayagiri campaign of Krishnadeva (Verghese 1995: 57).
2. The Vijayanagara ruler, Harihara built temples for Vitthal and Virupaksha. His successors increased the size and magnificence of the two temples. According to R.C. Dhere, the Vitthal temple at Hampi was not constructed to popularise the worship of Vitthal of Pandharpur, but to enhance the status

of the local Vitthal of the paired gods Vitthal-Birappa, by emulating the process by which his standing was raised at Pandharpur (Dhere 2011: 244). Dhere stated that the Vitthal temple at Vijayanagara was built before the reign of Krishnadeva. Of the nine stone inscriptions in that temple, three were from the reign of Krishnadeva Raya, one from that of Achyuta Raya, and five from the time of Sadasiva Raya. All three inscriptions of Krishnadeva Raya were dated the year 1513 CE (Saka 1435). One of them recorded the king's donation of land in the name of his parents at the time of an eclipse of the Sun. The other two inscriptions noted that his queens, Cinnadevi and Tirumaldevi, each donated land and built one gate tower (Dhere 2011: 78).

3. The *murti* in the Vitthal temple was, in all probability, a Vijayanagara icon. C. Narayana Rao of Anantapur, Madras claimed to have found the original image. But it was so badly damaged that it could not be definitely identified as the *mula-murti* (Verghese 1995: 61).
4. From the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, Pandharpur was under Muslim rule and the worship of Vithoba was severely affected. According to Anila Verghese, Vijayanagara then emerged as a centre of the Vitthal cult, and the legend represented the provisional pre-eminence of Vijayanagara over Pandharpur. According to her, it was not the image, but the worship of Vitthal that travelled from Pandharpur to Vijayanagara (Verghese 1995: 61). S.K. Aiyangar stated that Krishnadeva Raya "... also constructed a temple, perhaps the most magnificent monument in the city, the Vitala shrine with a view to housing the image of Vitala in Pandharpur, which had more than once suffered at the hands of the enemies. It is therefore generally ascribed to him that he built shrines for all those deities in the debatable land to the immediate north of the Vijayanagara territory to be properly housed and worshipped in the capital" (Aiyangar 1936: 21).
5. Vijayanagar was devastated in the battle of Talikota, when the four Sultans jointly attacked it. Rama Raya, the de facto ruler in the time of Sadasiva Raya, deployed both his brothers to block the invading forces and himself proceeded with the main army, without leaving even a small force to protect the capital. Robert Sewell wrote,

"Rama Rajah was now a very old man – Couto says 'he as ninety-six years old, but as brave as a man of thirty' – and, against the entreaties of his officers, he preferred to superintend the operations from a litter rather than remain for a long time mounted – a dangerous proceeding, since in case of a reverse a rapid retreat was rendered impossible. But he could not be induced to change his mind, remarking that in spite of their brave show the enemy were children and would soon be put to flight. So confident was he of victory that it is said he had ordered his men to bring him the head of Hussain Nizam, but to capture the Adil Shah and Ibrahim of Golconda alive, that he might keep them the rest of their lives in iron cages.

"The battle becoming more general ... Rama Raya, thinking to encourage his men descended from his litter and seated himself on a 'rich throne set with jewels, under a canopy of crimson velvet ..' ordering his treasurer to place heaps of money all around him, so that he might confer rewards on such of his followers as deserved his attention. 'There were also ornaments of gold and jewels placed for the same purpose.' [The fire of the enemy batteries] proved so destructive that 5000 Hindus were left dead on the field in front of the batteries... 5000 Muhammadan cavalry ... cut their way ... towards the spot where the Raya had taken post. He had again changed his position and ascended his litter ... when an elephant ... dashed forward towards him, and the litter bearers let fall their precious burden in terror at the animal's approach. Before he had time to recover himself and mount a horse, a body of the allies was upon him, and he was seized and taken prisoner. .. The Commander of the cavalry... immediately ordered his captive to be decapitated and the head to be elevated on a long spear, so that it might be visible to the Hindu troops" (Sewell 1900: 203-205).

For the next five months the victors wreaked havoc on the defenceless city, slaughtering helpless residents, destroying temples, sculptures, and palaces. Caesare Federici, who travelled from Goa to Vijayanagara in 1567 with two other merchants, described sack of the city by the combined forces of Bijapur, Golconda, and Ahmednagar after the Battle of

Talikota. He recorded that even the united efforts of these kingdoms could not defeat Vijayanagara, and it was treason by two Muslim generals of Vijayanagara that turned the tide against the kingdom,

"And yet these foure Kings were not able to overcome this Citie and the King of Bezeneger, but by treason. This King of Bezeneger was a Gentile, and had, amongst all other of his Captaines, two which were notable, and they were Moores: and these two Captaines had either of them in charge threescore and ten or fourscore thousand meń. These two Captaines being of one Religion with the foure Kings which were Moores, wrought means with them to betray their owne King into their hands. The King of Benzeneger esteemed not the force of the foure Kings his enemies, but went out of his Cities to wage battell with them in the fields; and when the Armies were joyned, the battell lasted but a while, not the space of four houres, because the two traiterous Captaines, in the chiefest of the fight, with their campanies turned their faces against their King, and made such disorder in his Armie, that as astonied they set themselves to flight...and the foure Kings of the Moores entered the Citie Bezeneger with great triumph, and there they remained sixe moneths, searching under houses and in all places for money and other things that were hidden, and then they departed to their owne Kingdomes, because they were not able to maintayne such a Kingdome as that was, so farre distant from their owne countrie" (Filliozat 2001: 318-326).

An anonymous account by a Jesuit in 1583 CE recorded the devastation of Vijayanagara,

"... in the course of the war, plundered and destroyed the city of Bisnaga, which was the royal city, and capital of the whole of the kingdom, so populous, rich and well-fitted that there were within its enclosure about a thousand temples, they say. The ruins that remain still show evidently that it was one of the wonders of the East" (Filliozat 2001: 329-330).

6. Dr. Nagaswamy refuted the charge made by some twentieth century historians that the Chola ruler, Kulottunga I persecuted Ramanuja. He pointed out that the largest number of inscriptions at Srirangam (nearly 80) belonged to his period.

They recorded gifts of land, gold, cattle, and jewels. Most of his queens, commanders, and other officers also made generous gifts. Further, as the Srirangam temple was under the direct control of the Chola king, he appointed the *Srikaryam* administrators of the temple. The names of all *Srikaryam* administrators were mentioned in the inscriptions, and Ramanuja was not listed among them. In fact, there was no reference to Ramanuja in any Srirangam inscription during his lifetime. Interestingly, the list of *Srikaryam* appointed during the reign of Kulottunga I and his son, Vikram Chola included those from Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vellala castes. No preference was shown to any particular caste in the appointments. According to Dr. Nagaswamy, modern historians then changed their stance and held that it was Kulottunga II who persecuted Ramanuja. That too was chronologically impossible. Kulottunga II ascended the throne in 1136, when Ramanuja was already 119 years old (Vaishnava historians were agreed that Ramanuja was born in 1017 and died at the age of 120). Moreover, Kulottunga's inscriptions were found at Srirangam, Kanchi, Varadaraja, and other Vishnu temples of Kanchi. Also, the *Karnataka Rajakkal Savistara Caritam* stated that the icon of Govindaraja of Chidambaram was carried to Tirupati by a boat by a Dasi named Tillai, where she had it installed and where it was in worship in 1808 CE.

Dr. Nagaswamy also pointed out that in the Vaikuntha Perumal temple at Kanchi there was a damaged image of a sixteenth century Vishnu lying in the *prakara*. It was an ancient custom to immerse all *bhinna* idols (broken images) in the deep sea or other water bodies. Many Vishnu images were made of wood or stucco and required replacement. It was possible that the original Govindaraja image, made of stucco, was damaged and had to be replaced. In several Vishnu temples in Tamil Nadu, the present main image made of stone belonged to the sixteenth century Vijayanagara period (as in the Parthasarathi Swami temple at Tiruvallikkeni, the Varadaraja temple at Kanchi, and the Sundaravarda temple at Uttaramerur, among others). Such a situation could have caused the replacement, poetically described as Vishnu being sent to the ocean which was his original abode. That was not necessarily an anti-Vaishnava act (Nagaswamy 2008: 13-15, 36-38, 44-50, 52-54).

7. Tipu Sultan sponsored the construction of the Ala Mosque in Seringapatam fort, in which pillars of Hindu origin were clearly visible. According to the Mysore Archaeological Survey, at least three temples in his realm were destroyed on Tipu's orders. The Hariharesvara temple at Harihar was looted and a section of it converted into a mosque, while the Varahasvami temple in Seringapatam and the Odakaraya temple in Hospet were both destroyed. Colonel Mark Wilks (1759-1831), soldier and historian of the East India Company and acting Resident at the Wodeyar court, observed,

   "... in 1799, the two temples within the fort of Seringapatam, alone remained open throughout the extent of his dominions" (Wilks Vol. IV 1980: 574).

   Some historians have cited instances of benefactions to temples as proof of Tipu's tolerance. The Ranganatha temple received seven silver cups, and a silver camphor according to inscriptions on these items. Three of the cups and the camphor-bearer, however, had additional etchings stating that they were presented by a Kalabe chief, named Kantayya. Possibly, they were taken away by Tipu and re-granted later, "at the prayer of the devotees of the temples with his inscriptions newly engraved." The Narasimha temple (at Melukote) was said to have been presented a kettledrum, though the name of the Sultan was not mentioned in the records. The Laskmikanta temple (at Kalale) was gifted four silver cups and a silver spittoon, the Narayanasvami temple (at Melukote) a silver spittoon, and the temple of Srikanthesvara a jewelled silver cup (Saletore 2001: 118-130). As no dates were inscribed, it was difficult to say whether they were gifted in peace time or times of war (when the ruler was under stress and sought divine intervention from any quarter).

   In 1791, Pindaris attached to the Maratha force of Raghunath Rao attacked the Sringeri Math, which caused great anguish among the Marathas. Following the raid, Tipu ordered his *asaf* at Bednur to provide cash, grain, and articles for the consecration of goddess Sharda. He also corresponded with the Sringeri Math to pray for his victory in war. He stated, "we are punishing the hostile armies that have marched against our country and are harassing our subjects. You are a holy personage and an ascetic. As it is your duty to be solicitious about the welfare of the many, we request you to pray to God along with the other Brahmans of the *matha*, so that all the enemies may suffer defeat and take flight and all the people of our country live happily, and to send us your blessings" (Brittlebank 1997: 129).

Mark Wilks, who participated in the third Anglo-Mysore war, wrote that Tipu would resort to anything to ward off defeat, "The religion which he revered, as well as that which he had cruelly persecuted, were equally invoked; the moola and the bramin were equally bribed to interpose their prayers for his deliverance, his own attendance at the mosque was frequent, and his devotion impressive..." (Wilks Vol. IV 1980: 735).

15

Resurrection of Deities in South India

In medieval south India, a large number of temples learning of advancing Muslim troops, hurriedly buried their icons, intending to reclaim them when the threat receded.[1] However, the danger persisted longer than expected. A Muslim Sultanate was established at Madurai, and continued for most of the fourteenth century. With the foundation of the Vijayanagara Empire and the defeat of the Madurai Sultanate, some buried bronzes were retrieved and reinstated. But in many cases, the exact location of the hidden caches (known only to a select few), was forgotten. The buried images became part of temple lore, remembered but not found. They now re-emerge, off and on.

THE SVETARANYESVARA TEMPLE

The Svetaranyesvara temple in Tiruvenkadu village (Tanjore district), constructed in the first half of the tenth century, enjoyed the patronage of the Chola royal family. Sometime during the disruptive medieval era, temple officials buried the images. Over time, knowledge of the burial spots was no longer remembered, and the images remained hidden till the twentieth century.

The bronzes were found in four groups in the temple, making it the richest haul of Chola bronzes from one site (Nagaswamy 1959-1960: 109-122).[2] The villagers returned the first set of images found in 1925, to the temple. These were re-consecrated and remain in worship. In 1951, a farmer ploughing a field found the second group of bronzes. These were acquired by the District Collector, T.K. Palaniappan for the newly established Thanjavur Art Gallery. In 1960, villagers found a third set of twelve images when building a new shrine for Virabhadra in the temple complex. Of these, two are in the Government Museum, Madras, the rest were returned to the temple for worship. In 1972, sixteen more images were found, which are now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery (Davis 2015: 15-16).

The finds included the great Shiva Vrsabhavahana, Kalyanasundara, Ksetrapala, Bhiksatana, Ardhanarisvara, Chandikesvara, Kannappar and several other images (Nagaswamy 1987: 1-2). A two-line inscription in Tamil characters of the tenth century on the pedestal of Nataraja, found along with Ardhanarisvara now in Madras Museum, referred to the deity as *Desi Abhayanithi Yabharrana. Nayaka* denoted the Lord, *Desi* stood for a particular type of dance in the non-Bharatham tradition of *Ananda tandava, Abhayanithi* signified the protector of the Universe, *abharana* or jewel meant Nataraja as the jewel among Gods (Damodaran 1999: 1-3). Nataraja was identified with Adavallur, mentioned in an inscription of Rajaraja in his 28th regnal year. One of his queens gifted gold to the image of Adavallur, for its worship.

On the magnificent bronze of Ardhanarisvara, Dr. Nagaswamy pointed out that the Shaiva saints, Appar and Sambandar, who lived in the seventh century, sang of the Ardhanarisvara form of Shiva in their *Tevaram* hymns of Tiruvenkadu village. The bronze was consecrated in the beginning of the eleventh century, almost four centuries after the saints. That was testimony to the fact that the *Tevaram* songs of this village inspired the sculptor while making the icon (Nagaswamy 2001: 1).

Several bronzes found at Tiruvenkadu were mentioned in temple inscriptions. A twelfth century inscription at the temple referred to the ritual bathing of Shiva and the sixty-three saints at the nearby Kaveri River. None of these images could be seen in the temple today (Dehejia 1990: 66-72, 123).

Sri Svarnamukhisvara Temple Near Vellore, in North Arcot District

In the 1970s, about twenty bronzes were discovered face down in a carefully prepared pit in the Sri Svarnamukhisvara temple near Vellore, in North Arcot district. A stone slab was found at the lowest section (Nagaswamy 1987: 2).

1987 – Finds in Three Districts

In 1987, within a span of two months, a large number of bronzes were found in the three districts of Tanjore, Salem, and South Arcot.

Konulanpallam (Tanjore District)

That year, twelve bronzes, a *diparadhana* utensil, other *puja* vessels, and broken metal plates were found in Konulanpallam, a hamlet of Tittacceri (Tiruvidaimarudur taluk, Tanjore district). The entire collection of bronzes and *puja* utensils was found in a pit during construction of the house of a Muslim gentleman. Though Muslims now occupied the entire street, a century earlier the area was a vacant site, where Muslims started to purchase land. Dr. Nagaswamy and his team, while searching the area found in an Ayyanar temple one hundred yards from the find spot, two stone sculptures, one a *linga* and the other a Nandi, both of the twelfth century CE. Though the Ayyanar temple was a modern structure, the presence of the two Chola sculptures indicated that a Chola period Shiva temple once stood at that site, and the bronzes found belonged to it. The discovery of all the mandatory images of Ganesh, Somaskanda, Tani Amman, Nataraja Sivakami, Chandesvara etc., and *puja* utensils confirmed that they formed a group of images of the temple. Stylistically, all the bronzes and utensils belonged to the twelfth century.

An inscription on the *diparadhana* stand read 'Edirilicola.' That was a title of two Chola rulers – Kulottunga Chola II and his successor, Rajaraja Chola II (1146-1172), both in the twelfth century. From that, it was apparent that all the bronzes were a royal dedication. According to Dr. Nagaswamy, the group seemed to have been consecrated by Kulottunga II (1133-1150) (Nagaswamy 1987: 4-5).

MANAPALLI VILLAGE (SALEM DISTRICT)

Also in 1987, a group of bronzes was recovered from Manappalli village (Namakkal taluk, Salem district) where there were two adjoining temples, a Bhimesvara Shiva temple of the ninth century and a Vishnu temple of the sixteenth.

Among the fragmentary inscriptions found in the Bhimesvara Shiva temple, the earliest was of Rajaraja Chola. The inscriptions revealed that Manappalli village was also called *Singalantaka-caturvedi-mangalam*. As *Singalantaka* was a title of Rajaraja Cola I, the village received its name and patronage from the Chola monarch. Shiva of the temple was called Bhimesvara, a name it retained till this day.

In the Bhimesvara Shiva temple, there was a ninth century stone sculpture of Subrahmanya, as well as a Saptamatrika-s panel of the same period. There were also images of Ganesh, Devi, and Bhairava. These deities were in worship in the 12th century when, as per the record of Rajaraja II, provisions were made for food offerings to them (ARE Nos. 230-231/1968-69).

The bronzes found in the vicinities of the two temples included five metal images and a metal *kuttuvilakku* (lamp on stand). They were all found in a pit, placed upside down in sand. The site was being cleared, when the workers found the images, all of which belonged to the Bhimesvara Shiva temple. Among the images were a standing Ganesh with a *prabha*, two standing images of Parvati, one Natesh, and one Tripurantaka, the last two being of great historic interest.

The Bhimesvara Shiva temple was in use till the 12th-13th century CE. The bronzes were buried for safety sometime later when an invasion took place, and the inhabitants migrated elsewhere. In the 16th century, the village was renamed Ramarasa Samudram, and an *agaram* established when the Vishnu temple was built. A resettlement took place. The bronzes were likely buried before the Vishnu temple was built (Nagaswamy 1987: 5-6).

ESALAM BRONZES AND COPPER PLATES (SOUTH ARCOT DISTRICT)

The third find of the year was from Esalam village in South Arcot district. The village residents found a collection of bronzes, temple utensils, and a copper plate charter, in the premises of the Tiru Ramanathesvara temple during renovation work. The bronzes were found firmly placed in river sand upside down, with the smaller images at a higher level and the bigger ones below. Beneath all the images was a copper plate charter, issued by Rajendra Chola I, in 1036 CE. None of the bronzes or utensils found in the pit was later than 1300 CE. They were in all likelihood buried during Muslim invasions, between 1310 and 1350 CE. After informing Government officials of the discovery, the villagers instated all the images in the temple and arranged for their worship (Nagaswamy 1987: 6).[3]

THE BRONZES DISCOVERED

Among the big bronzes was an image of Chandesvara, which Dr. Nagaswamy identified as a portrait of Sarvasiva Pandita, the *rajaguru* of Rajendra Cola, and builder of the Esalam temple (which seemed to have been completed around 1027 CE). Other bronzes included two images of Durga with *prabha,* and two bronzes of Shiva - four armed, holding *sula* and *pasa* in the upper arms and showing *abhaya* and *varada* in the lower arms.

A standing Shiva with Parvati, datable to the ninth century, seemed to be from western India. An inscription in the Brihadiswara temple at Tanjore had referred to Sarvasiva Pandita. The disciples and grand disciples of the *rajaguru,* who were from Madhyadesa, Aryadesa, and Gaudadesa and were suitably qualified, were alone entitled to succeed to this priesthood and enjoy the endowment. Sarvasiva Pandita was clearly from western India, and possibly belonged to a great line of Shaiva *acharyas* who came to the Chola country, and brought this image, and the philosophy of his sect. The image could have been for his personal worship. A number of tiny bronze images retrieved, including a Bhairava, were probably for the personal *puja* of the Guru. The presence of Durga, Bhairava, and Pasupata images would show he was a Pashupata *acharya* or Kalamukha.

The find of a Vishnu image, and a bell with the *cakra* handle, in the group perhaps indicated that items of a Vishnu temple were also hurriedly added to the hoard, for safe keeping.

The Esalam copper plate grant of Rajendra Cola was the third charter of the ruler found thus far. The Tiruvalangadu plates issued in his 6th year, and the Karandai copper plates issued in his 8th year were the two charters recovered earlier. The Karandai plates was the biggest royal charter found inscribed on copper sheets in India. They recorded the creation of a *brahmadeya* and gifts of land to 1080 Brahmins. The Tiruvalangadu and Esalam grants recorded the gift of *devatana* taxes to temples. Both were found within the temple grounds, along with the bronze images. Clearly, they were buried in troubled times to safeguard the bronzes and the charters. The larger Leiden grant was made by Rajaraja Cola but issued by Rajendra, making a total of four.

Esalam village was a suburb of Rajarajacaturvedimangalam (Ennayiram), where Rajendra Chola established one of the biggest Vedic colleges. Nearby was Brahmadesam, where several Chola temples were built. Sarvasiva Pandita succeeded Isanasiva as *rajaguru*, probably after the latter's death. Rajendra Cola gifted land to the temple (Nagaswamy 1987: 7-13).

SHIVA TEMPLE AT TIRUVINDALUR

A set of metal images, along with the largest copper plate of Rajendra Chola II, was recovered from the front yard of a Shiva temple in Tiruvindalur. The images were carefully buried face down. The copper plate listed a contribution of Rajendra Chola II, and also validated an endowment to the temple by his elder brother, Rajadhiraja I (1018-1055) (Nagaswamy 2011: 53-54).

KONERIRAJAPURAM TEMPLE

The Chola queen, Sembiyan Mahadevi built the Konerirajapuram temple in memory of her husband, during the reign of her son. It had several excellent dated bronzes; of which the bronze consort of Shiva Vrishabhavahana was now part of the Gautam Sarabhai collection in Ahmedabad (Dehejia 1990: 4-7).[4]

TEMPLE AT MELAPERUMPALLAM

Many Chola bronzes were found in a temple in the coastal village of Melaperumpallam (earlier known as Valampuram), located three miles from Tiruvengadu. They were all dated as per an inscription to 1178 CE. Among them was the magnificent bronze of Shiva, described in an inscription at the temple as '*Vattanaigal padanadanda nayakar*,' or 'The Lord who walked with swaying gait.' The saint Appar had, in the seventh century, visualized Shiva of Valampuram village as the Enchanting Mendicant, carrying a *vina* in one hand, wearing silk robes, dancing and moving joyfully. The donor of the image directed the sculptor to keep Appar's verses as his guide and give them form (Nagaswamy 2001: 1).

IMAGE FOUND IN DRY TANK

The image was retrieved from a dry tank in front of the temple. Its shine was due to polishing with soapy nuts (*boondi kottai*) of the palm olive trees that were abundant in the area. Two other images dedicated in the same year and listed in the inscription, were also found in the temple tank. One of them was the earliest surviving bronze of Kirata-Shiva, the other a gracious figure of the accompanying Uma (Dehejia 1990: 116-117).

NALLUR TEMPLE

An underground cellar in the Nallur temple near Kumbakoṇam (Tanjore district) revealed sixteen bronzes of excellent workmanship. The story was related by Dr. R. Nagaswamy, who was instrumental in retrieving the bronzes. He was informed of images hidden in a safe room by the temple superintendent; but only one person knew of the secret passage to the underground cellar. When Dr. Nagaswamy met that person, he refused to divulge the path, stating it was a family secret. He said the cellar had been opened about forty years ago; there were no bronzes, but some jewellery that had been removed. Dr. Nagaswamy reported the matter to government authorities, and returned to Nallur with officials. They broke a wall that was pointed as the secret passage. Behind it were two strong wooden doors, locked and sealed. Neither the locks nor the padlocks could be broken. Finally the doors were smashed. They found a small empty room. The person who knew the secret way then requested them to wait outside, while he busied himself inside the room. When the wall caved in, they went inside. They saw he had removed four feet of sand from one corner, disclosing a brick floor. After removing some bricks, granite flooring was seen. The granite slabs opened like doors, and steps led to an underground chamber. The chamber was about 6 feet high, and the floor space about 305x152.5 cm. Though there was no light inside, fresh air blew from a small hole in the wall. The chamber was empty, but the bronzes were stored in a side room. They included a magnificent Devi, a Kalyanasundara, a Parvati, a Sambandar, besides ornamental lamps and vessels (Nagaswamy 1982: *Lalit Kala* 20). A truly stupendous effort had been made to protect the deities!

CHIDAMBARAM TEMPLE

A hidden storeroom within the boundaries of the Chidambaram temple yielded around eighty bronzes dating from the tenth century onwards, including the figure of the saint Sundarar's wife, Paravai ca. 970 (Dehejia 1990: 124).

GANGAIKONDACHOLAPURAM

One likely place where images were stored was beneath the high platform in front of the Gangaikondacholapuram temple. It was believed to cover a subterranean passage. The platform was certainly disturbed and rebuilt around the year 1310, since some of the haphazardly built-in stones had fragmentary inscriptions of the thirteenth century. The Director of Archaeology has stated, "It is not unlikely that the empty underground space below the great mandapa and the space between the steps were utilized as store houses."

Most certainly Rajendra Chola would have presented many bronzes to his great temple, though only five were evident today. Perhaps they will emerge from the spots they were hidden in 1310 CE (Dehejia 1990: 124-125).

PATHUR NATARAJA

Among the most famous cases of buried bronzes was of the Pathur Nataraja. Pathur was a village on the banks of the Vettar River in the Kaveri delta area, east of Thanjavur. A Shiva temple, called Visvanathasvami was constructed there in the twelfth century by a prominent local headman, Visvanatha. From the tenth century, the Cholas had emerged as major patrons of Shiva Nataraja; and processional Nataraja images were commissioned by countless Shiva temples in Tamil Nadu. Visvanatha and the village elders of Pathur also instated one such image in the Pathur temple, where the Shiva *linga* served as the ritual centre.

At some point, the Nataraja bronze was ceremoniously buried by temple officials. They dug a pit in the temple courtyard, and at the bottom placed various ritual implements and a trident, Shiva's special weapon. These were covered, probably with sand, and on top were placed eight bronze icons, lined up face down: images of Shiva Somaskanda, Chandesvara, Ganesh, Shiva Bhairava, the Nayanmar saints Appar and Sambandar, and two images of Parvati. The Nataraja was placed face down on top, and the entire cache layered with hay and the pit filled in. The images were obviously handled with care, and may have been wrapped in cloth.

In 1976, Ramamurti, a 38 year-old landless labourer, began to build a cowshed near his hut on what he believed was unoccupied waste land. He dug a pit to get soil for the walls of the shed. The pit was within the old brick walls of the temple, though the temple itself was in ruins. At a depth of a man's height he found the nine metal images all lying face down (Davis 2015: 225-238).

Ramamurti sold the Nataraja to a buyer. The tortuous journey of the icon from the pit to London has been told several times. Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu police took possession of all the bronzes (except the Nataraja). In June 1982, the Nataraja was purchased by the Bumper Development Corporation. The British police seized it on 25th August 1982 (Greenfield 1996: 153-156). A lengthy case was fought by the Government of India in a London court. Finally, Justice Ian Kennedy decreed,

> Whether the plaintiffs (India and others) have a title to the Nataraja, I am satisfied that the pious intention of the twelfth century notable who gave land and built the Vishwanathaswamy temple in Pathur, remains in being and is personified by the temple itself, a juristic entity which has a title to the Nataraja, superior to that of the defendant (Bumper Development Corporation) (Pal 1992: 170).

SHIVAPURAM NATARAJA

Somewhat similar was the case of the Shivapuram Nataraja, a tenth century Chola bronze found by villagers in Shivapuram (Tanjore district). It was handed over to the temple for worship. At some point, the bronze was sent for cleaning (the long spell of burial had somewhat corroded it). A copy was surreptiously made, and returned to the temple as the cleaned image. The original was eventually purchased by the Norton Simon Foundation in 1973, for a million dollars. In December 1974, the Government of India filed a case for possession of the deity (Davis 2015: 242-244).

NAGAPATTINAM

In 1006 CE, the year that construction of the Brihadiswara temple commenced, Rajaraja granted permission to an embassy from the Sailendra king, Chulamanivarman of Java to build a Buddhist vihara in the coastal town of Nagapattinam. Rajaraja also granted the village of Anaimangalam for maintenance of the vihara. Though he was a Shiva devotee, that did not preclude his endowment to the vihara (Dehejia 1990: 77-78). The relics of the vihara could be seen till 1846 CE, when it was pulled it down by Jesuit missionaries to build their college.

According to T.N. Ramachandran, former Joint Director General of Archaeology, about 850 Buddhist bronzes of the Mahayana school dating from the 11th to 15th centuries have been found at Nagapattinam since 1856 (Ramachandran 2005: xi-xii). Digging in the Vellippalayam and Nanayakkara streets in Nagapattinam unearthed 350 Buddhist bronzes.[5]

The recovery of the images helped to reconstruct the history of south Indian Buddhism. Due to maritime commerce between eastern India and the Malaya Peninsula, a colony of Malay Buddhists, primarily from Srivijaya, lived in Nagapattinam during Chola times (871-1250). They built at least two Buddhist shrines in the early eleventh century; the 'Rajaraja-perum-palli' named after Rajaraja I and the 'Rajendra-Cola-perum-palli' or 'Cola-perum-palli' after Rajendra Cola I, during whose reigns these were respectively built. The smaller Leiden grant, dated in the twentieth year of the reign of Kulottunga (1090 CE), recorded gifts to both shrines. The 350 bronze Buddhist images, accidentally discovered at the Rajaraja-perum-palli since 1856, were votive in nature.

The earliest discovery at Nagapattinam was an inscription on the pedestal of a bronze image found in March 1856, along with four other images, all of the Buddha, in a brick chamber. The chamber had been carefully concealed more than three feet below the roots of an old Mohwa tree, near an ancient tower called "Puduveli-Gopuram" or "Chinese" or "Jain Pagoda." The tree, 700-800 years old, was cut down by French Jesuits for their construction work.

The careful manner in which the images were hidden in the brick chamber, led their first chroniclers Foucaux and Sir Walter Elliot to conclude,

> ...in view of some impending danger they were concealed momentarily for protection but were clearly meant for being restored for religious worship.

All the five images represented the Buddha; four were of bronze, the fifth a mixture of porcelain and clay and of exquisite workmanship (Ramachandran 2005: 16-25).[6]

NEW TEMPLE BUILT FOR OLD ICON

In Singanallur, a hamlet near Coimbatore (Kongu country), is a remarkable bronze of Trivikrama, dated by Dr. Nagaswamy to around the eighth century. It is the main image, the *mulabhera*, in a temple that is hardly two hundred years old. According to local tradition, the bronze was brought from the other side of the river bank during a flood, and the modern temple erected to house it. The village on the other side of the river bank was Vellalur, where there is an ancient Vishnu temple, now named Varadaraja temple. It is however, mentioned in inscriptions as 'Ulagalanda Perumal temple,' i.e. temple of Trivikrama. Clearly the image of Trivikrama now in Singanallur originally belonged to the Vishnu temple of Vellalur (Nagaswamy: *Lalit Kala* Number 25: 9-11).

NEW IMAGES COMMISSIONED

Inscriptions at the Tiruvottiyur temple, located just outside Madras city, confirmed that in the year 1046, a set of 63 Shaiva saints were in worship. The set presently consecrated dated to the sixteenth. As the original icons could not be retrieved, new ones were commissioned as replacement (Dehejia 1990: 123).

TIRUVIDAIMARADUR TEMPLE

Inscriptions in the Tiruvidaimaradur temple listed a range of metal images gifted by two queens of Rajaraja I, who were regular worshippers at the shrine. The images included a gold image of the goddess, a gold hand (*hasta*) embellished with jewels, many bronzes including dancing Shiva, goddesses, saints Sambandar and Sundarar, and a variety of gold and silver vessels. Though it was a Chola temple, presently everything in the temple was post-fifteenth century (Dehejia 1990: 123). Which meant that the Chola images could not be recovered, and new icons were instated in more settled times.

OLD IMAGE RE-CONSECRATED

According to an inscription in the Vishnu temple at Kannanur, ten miles from Trichinopoly, the Vishnu image that had been concealed during the Muhammadan invasions, was re-consecrated and restored in the temple in the fifteenth century. That confirmed an extensive practice of burying images in the Tamil country in the medieval era. In the altered circumstance of the fifteenth century, temples that could not locate their hidden bronzes, commissioned new ones, as in the case of the Tiruvottiyur and Tiruvidaimaradur temples (Dehejia 1990: 123-124).

CHOLA BRONZES REACH DENMARK

The National Museum of Denmark has thirteen Chola bronzes that were obtained by Peter Anker (1744-1832), when he served as governor of Tranquebar from 1788 to 1806. They were found buried along with objects for ceremonial use in 1799, during construction work in Tranquebar. Peter Anker believed that the bronzes had been buried five hundred years ago, at the time of the invasions of the Delhi Sultans, to save them from destruction.

The local Brahmin priests permitted Peter Anker to keep the bronzes. They felt that the sculptures had lost their power and religious purity. According to them, the only way the bronzes could regain their glory was if a new temple was constructed befitting their sacred status. But as no Indian in the region had the resources to construct such a temple, the Brahmins donated the bronzes to Peter Anker at a formal ceremony. In return, Anker made an offering of rice to the nearby temple, and gave Brahmins betel nuts, leaves, and rice as a token of friendship.

Anker took the collection back to Norway. In 1843, after his death, the bronzes were purchased by the Ethnographical Department in the Royal Art Museum (1825-1865), and are now in the National Museum of Denmark.

From being objects of veneration in majestic temples, to being buried for centuries, to being transported to foreign shores, it had been quite a journey!

NOTES

1. In a chapter titled *Bhayaraksartham Niskrtih,* the *Marici Samhita* (a Vaikhanasa Vaishnavite text) laid down the procedures for burying metal images in moments of calamity, and of restoring them for worship in propitious times,

   "When there is fear from robbers, enemies, invasion by the opponent kings, or disturbance in the village, in order to protect the *kautuka, snapana, utsava* and *balibera* (images used in *bali* offerings, festivals, bathing ceremonies, etc.) the metal images, and that of the goddesses should be hidden".

   "In a secret and clean place, a pit should be dug. In it sand should be spread. Over that, the kusa grass should be spread. The Goddess of earth should be invoked; over this sanctified water should be sprinkled, reciting the mantra, *"apo hi stha"* the acarya, the worshipping priest, the *yajamana* along with the devotees should enter the shrine, offer salutation to the God, and obtain permission from the God, stating that "Lord, so long as there is fear, till such time be you pleased to remain living in this earth." Then the divine power from the metal image should be transferred to the main deity. If there is no main image it should be invoked in the heart (of the priest) uttering the mantra *pra tad visnus tapate;* the image should be carefully placed in the pit in order, reciting the mantra Yadvaisnava; the head (of the image) should be laid facing east. The pit should be closed either with sand or earth. The mouth of the pit should be closed tightly. Then one should enter the shrine again, salute the main image; a *kurca* made of *kusa* grass should be made, the divine power should be transferred from the main image to the *kurca* and the same should be worshipped. If more than one month passes, that *kurca* should be discarded, a new one made in its place and worshipped. If the conditions improve, the metal image should be retrieved, cleaned with tamarind and *punyaha* rite should be performed" (Nagaswamy 1987: 3).

   The rituals of burial were common, only the *mantras* to be recited differed among various religious groups. No stone image has been found buried for protection so far in south India.

2. The bronzes found at Tiruvenkadu included an imposing Shiva as Vrishabhavahana, his arm placed on his bull (now missing) produced for the temple in 1011, a year after the Brihadiswara temple was completed. This was one of the masterpieces of Chola bronzes. The bronze Parvati that accompanied Shiva as Vrishabhavahana was added a year later, in 1012. Equally striking was a group of figures portraying the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, now in the Tanjore Art Gallery. The majestic bridegroom, with matted locks piled high above his head in the shape of a crown, was portrayed taking Parvati's right hand in marriage. Next to her stood the goddess Lakshmi, gently guiding the bashful bride towards the groom. On Shiva's side once stood Vishnu who was believed to have solemnized the divine wedding. Another Rajaraja bronze from the temple was the hunter-saint Kanappan. Wearing a short garment wrapped around his waist and clad in sandals, Kanappan held in one hand the eyeball that he had plucked out as an offering to Shiva. Sundarar and his wife Paravai were another set of bronzes from Tiruvenkadu in the characteristic style of Rajaraja bronzes (Dehejia 1990: 66-72).
3. Dr. Nagaswamy re-counted that on receiving news of the Esalam finds he, with the Tahsildar, instantly left for the village,

   "We were soon joined by the Deputy Superintendent of Police. On seeing us, the entire village over 2000 people – both men and women – thronged to the temple. I had the privilege of explaining to them a brief account of the copper plates, the history of the temple etc. The entire village as one man was overwhelmed with joy and in one voice wanted to arrange for their worship. We responded to their requests...." (Nagaswamy 1987: 7).
4. Sembiyan Mahadevi was among the most remarkable queens of the tenth century in India. She married Gandaraditya, while he was heir-apparent to the Chola throne. He died very young, and Sembiyan became a widow when hardly thirty. After the rule of other male family members, the throne finally passed to her son, Uttama Chola. Sembiyan lived to a ripe old age and

was respected by all members of the family. She made a major contribution to Chola art; her first inscribed temple donation was in the year 941, when she was still crown princess. She built temples and commissioned bronzes till her death in 1006. The finest and largest Chola bronzes of the tenth century were commissioned by her. The dancing Shiva was an innovation of the stone workers of this queen (Dehejia 1990: 1-4).

5. The US Homeland Security sent Kirit Mankodi a photograph of a large seated Buddha in the Nagapattinam style, dated to the eleventh century, which had been recovered from a prominent antique dealer of Indian origin, and was allegedly stolen from the site (Mankodi 2015: 202-203).
6. In the Polonnaruwa complex in the North Central Province, Sri Lanka, a big bronze image and several small ones were found carefully placed inside a pot and buried. The finds indicated that while burying the images, a special *puja* was performed, as charcoal used for incense was found in the pit. The images were evidently buried with veneration, in the hope that they would be regained when conditions improved. However, later generations lost track of them. Most of the bronzes found were acquired for the Museum, while some were returned to the temple (Nagaswamy 1987: 2).

16

Unanticipated Assault

In a truly unforeseen situation, temples and deities remained vulnerable even in independent India. The threat of foreign invaders and iconoclasts gave way to that of atheists, sceptics, rationalists, and unscrupulous idol smugglers. The danger was particularly pronounced in Tamil Nadu, but no region was immune to the new peril.

ELEVENTH CENTURY CHOLA TEMPLE DEMOLISHED

A documented case of demolition in free India was of the eleventh century Chola Naganathaswamy temple in Thanjavur (Pl. 56), that was pulled down in the name of renovation. The Hindu Religions and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Board, entrusted with the management of ancient temples, functioned more as an agency of destruction than preservation (Pl. 57). The temple was said to have been built for the coronation of Rajendra Chola. Sculptures engraved on the temple walls showed the king worshipping at the shrine, along with members of his family (Aravindan Neelakandan *Swarajya* 21-8-2017).

According to epigraphist and historian, K. Balasubramanian, the temple had more than ten inscriptions of the Chola period. The people of the village, historians, and archaeologists pleaded with authorities for protection of the shrine, to no avail (*The Hindu* 16-5-2013).

The destruction of the cultural heritage seemed co-terminus with the advent of Dravidian parties. A report in *India Today* (31-5-1984) stated,

> During DMK rule in 1968, a part functionary in Thanjavur quietly converted some 20 acres of agricultural land belonging to the Thirumangalakkudi Siva temple run by the Thiruvavaduthurai mutt into house sites. The temple got a mandatory injunction from the court to restore the land to agricultural use. But the decree was never executed because of political pressure on the mutt head. The housing colony remains to this day. Earlier, in 1967, another powerful district office-bearer of the DMK persuaded the Thiruvavaduthurai mutt head to lease him almost an entire village in Pattukottai taluk owned by the mutt. This man regularly defaulted in his rent payments to the mutt, though he was collecting high rents for the portions he subleased to others. He lost control of the land only when the AIADMK came to power in 1977 and the sublessees were made leaseholders.

That did not materially change the situation. The *India Today* story continued,

> The AIADMK, in its turn, has used the infrastructure of HR & CE Department for its own political ends. Most temple trustees are AIADMK members and many of the paid temple servants are also ruling party men (as cited by Aravindan Neelakandan in *Swarajya* 21-8-2017).

And in December 2018, it was reported that the famous four hundred year old Agastheewarar temple, in Chennai city had been sold off by temple trustees in violation of all rules! Mohanraj, a police officer examining the case, said the market value of the temple land was Rs 1800 crores (*The Pioneer* 9-12-2018).

EIGHT HUNDRED YEAR OLD SHIVA TEMPLE DEMOLISHED

A Shiva temple built around eight hundred years ago by the Kongu Cholas in Tholur village (Nammakkal district), under control of the HR&CE department, was smashed to pieces with the aid of a bulldozer. The Kongu Cholas were a branch of the Imperial Cholas and had ruled over the Kongu region comprising Coimbatore, parts of Salem, and Nammakkal. The temple was demolished though it was a living shrine, where prayers were offered daily (*The Hindu* 25-8-2016).

UNESCO SURVEY

A UNESCO survey in 2017 observed that officials of the HR&CE department had "massacred" ancient temples, and looked the other way in the face of blatant violation of rules. The result was large-scale encroachment of temple lands and destruction of temples. An investigating team was stunned to find a VIP guest house with a toilet in the compound of the Sri Arunachaleswara temple in Tiruvannamalai (*Times of India* 12-8-2017). An arrack shop adorned the entrance of the Sriranganatha temple.

TEMPLES STARVED OF FUNDS

No less alarming was the manner in which richly endowed shrines were systematically stripped of their assets. At the time of independence, the Brihadiswara temple at Tanjore possessed 157 acres of prime agricultural land that yielded two, and sometimes three crops. According to conservative estimates, each acre produced at least 100 quintals of paddy a year. Under state government rules, tenants cultivating temple lands were required to give 25 per cent of their annual produce to the temple as rent. But the temple was often in dire straits, with not enough rice even for the daily offering of *naivedyam*. According to lease agreements, the temple should receive 3,360 quintals of paddy annually; it actually got 280 quintals. In November 1983, the temple gates once did not open in the morning as there was nothing to offer the deity! The problem was temporarily overcome, but remains. Tenants simply refuse to pay the rent.

Eighty-eight other temples in Thanjavur face a similar predicament. They get hardly anything from temple lands; tenants either pay paltry rents or default. A law enacted by the AIADMK protects them from eviction. The Rajagopalaswamy temple in Thanjavur was once a famous shrine. It receives almost nothing from its 75 acres of agricultural land, and is now not even properly lit and resembles a dungeon. The once resplendent Siddhi Vinayagar temple, also in Thanjavur, is in ruins and kept locked, except for a brief spell in the morning when a poorly paid priest performs nominal *puja*. Bold letters on the temple dome declare "Full DMK," connoting that the temple walls have been reserved for DMK slogans.

The HR&CE department controls 34,000 temples in Tamil Nadu, which collectively own over five lakh acres of agricultural land. But the total annual income of these temples, including cash offerings, is a paltry Rs. 19 crore. That works out to Rs. 500 per temple per month (*India Today* 31-5-1984).

In 2018, the Madras High Court directed the HR&CE department to furnish the "whereabouts" of 50,000 acres of prime temple lands that had mysteriously disappeared from the records (*The Pioneer* 9-12-2018).

GANESH STATUE SMASHED IN CHHATTISGARH

The problem extended beyond the Tamil region. In a disturbing instance in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, a thousand year-old Ganesh statue of the time of the Nagvanshi dynasty was destroyed by Maoists (Pl. 58). The statue was located atop Dholkal mountain at a height of 13,000 feet, and was apparently pushed down. It was found broken into 56 pieces (*DNA* 28-1-2017). The image was painstakingly restored by villagers and, with the help of the administration, fixed permanently on the mountain (*Times of India* 2-2-2017).

So many tragic happenings have not been recorded. Guruvayur, Puri, Srisailam, Kashi, Mathura, Siddhi Vinayak, and countless other shrines are all hostages to state governments, that pillage, plunder, sell icons, and destroy at will. Over one lakh temples are directly or indirectly under government control in the five southern states alone. Foxes in henhouses! How can Government control temples in a secular state, and to what end? To denude the country of its revered heritage that was safeguarded over stormy millennia?

A petition filed by R. Venkatraman before the Madras High Court (Crl OP No. 8690 of 2017) alleged that officials of the HR&CE department showed six images from Chola period temples intact, when they were actually missing. Five of the icons belonged to the Sri Viswanathaswamy temple at Keelmanakudi and one to the Arulmigu Sri Idumbeswarar temple.

Another case filed by E.G. Rajendran (Crl OP 12060 of 2017) claimed that a senior police official, with two other police personnel, came in possession of six icons when investigating a case. Two of these were sold to a notorious smuggler in Chennai, who in turn disposed them for an exorbitant sum. Though an FIR was registered against the police officers, no action was taken. They were in fact promoted.

In his order of 21st July 2017, Madras High Court judge, Justice R. Mahadevan castigated the HR&CE department for its appalling dereliction of duty. He noted that after being ravaged for centuries "... a new form of attack is carried out by smuggling the ancient idols. Foreigners and disbelievers see the idols as antiques worth only ... in terms of money, but the people of this country see them in the semblance of god, culture, and identity" (R. Jagannathan *Times Of India* 27-8-2017).

Thefts of rare objects is rampant all over the country. A priceless six and a half inches Buddha bronze of the Pala period was filched, with thirteen other statues, from Nalanda. It was returned to India fifty-seven years later, on the occasion of the country's 71st independence day, due to the meticulous research of S. Vijay Kumar, co-founder of the India Pride Project. S. Vijay Kumar tracked the Buddha to a London dealer of Indian objects and was able to demonstrate that it was the one stolen decades ago (Maria Thomas *Quartz India* 23-8-2018).

There has been large-scale pilferage from Chandraketugarh, a 2,500 year old archaeological site near Bidyadhari river, about 35 km north-east of Kolkata (Pl. 59). The site had been excavated in 1909 by Rakhaldas Banerji, the famous excavator of Mohenjodaro. Items stolen from Chandraketugarh included a terracotta Yakshi, that was offered for sale at a prestigious art fair in Brussels in 2009.

A pilfered seated marble Jina from Mount Abu, Rajasthan, was put up for sale by a leading auction house abroad.

An image of Brahma and his Consort, and a Ganesh were stolen from the open air museum at Rani Ki Vav at Patan, Gujarat in 2001. The Rani ki Vav, the "Queen's Step-Well," was built in the last decades of the eleventh century by queen Udayamati as a memorial to her husband, Bhimadeva I of the Solanki dynasty (Mankodi 2012: 3-4, 32-33). The eleventh century Brahma sculpture was eventually traced to a dealer in London. It was openly exhibited in the London art week in 2006. There is no information on the whereabouts of the Ganesh. The sites *plunderedpast.in* and *poetryinstone.in* are vigorously engaged in tracking stolen art.

Idol smugglers brazenly stole from old abandoned temples. All Chola bronzes in the Sri Brihadiswara temple in Sripuranthan were removed by people affiliated to Sanjeevi Asokan, who sold them to notorious New York based antique smuggler, Subhash Kapoor. Another target was the Varadaraja Perumal temple in Suthamalli. The temple was in a derelict condition and opened for worship every three-four months. It was wiped clean of its bronzes. The theft was discovered in April 2008, when the temple was unlocked for prayers. These cases were a mere drop in the ocean. Subhash Kapoor and his associates plundered antiquities for decades. The Sri Balambika-Karkodeswar temple in Kamarasavalli village, an early Chola shrine, was endowed with rare stone and bronze sculptures by Rajaraja Chola and his son, Rajendra. It too fell victim to idol thieves (Kumar 2018: 18-23, 32).

M. Selvaraj, of the Idol Wing set up by the Tamil Nadu government in 1980, was instrumental in the recovery of the Maragatha Emerald *Linga* that had been stolen from the Maruntheeswarar temple in Thiruvarur district. However, several other missing emerald *lingams* in Tamil Nadu remain untraceable (Kumar 2018: 57-58).

In 2005, the sixth century Sri Narambunatha Swamy temple was robbed of all thirteen bronzes, which included a Nataraja and an image of Manickavasagar, the ninth-century Tamil poet-saint. Five of these were sent to Subhash Kapoor. Five years later and some months before Kapoor's arrest, five of the bronzes were returned to Tamil Nadu by smugglers feeling the heat of enforcement agencies (Kumar 2018: 93-98).

Complicit in the largescale trafficking of Indian antiques were art dealers, government officials, police, auction houses, and some prestigious museums abroad. Subhash Kapoor was finally arrested by Interpol in 2011. A considerable amount of information on his nefarious deals had been collected by S. Vijay Kumar and his dedicated team. At the time of Subhash Kapoor's arrest, stolen Indian art worth a hundred million dollars was recovered from his warehouses and art galleries. Central to his arrest were images of Shiva Nataraja and Sivakami that had been stolen from the temple in Suthamalli. S. Vijay Kumar proved the theft by accessing rare archival images with the French Institute at Pondicherry, that had commenced documenting temple art in 1955. These showed that the icons were in the temple till as late as 1994. However, the Suthamalli bronzes have not been retrieved, and probably remain hidden somewhere in New York (Kumar 2018: 81-85, 182).

An audit by the HR&CE department revealed that 1,200 statues were stolen between 1992 and 2017. In January 2018, it informed the Madras High Court,

> Of the more than 1200 thefts reported, only 56 had been solved and the possession of stolen items was restored only in respect of 18 cases. In cases involving theft of 385 icons/ idols from 33 temples, complaints had been closed with the items being declared not traceable by the police department (Kumar 2018: 188-189).

The Idol Wing has been as spectacular a failure as the HR&CE wing in protecting national heritage. And the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the functioning of the Archaeological Survey of India in 2013, declared only nineteen items were recovered between 1970 and 2000, and none between 2000 and 2012! (Kumar 2018: 188).

Weep beloved, sacred land. Your worshippers weep with you.

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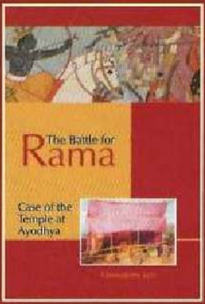
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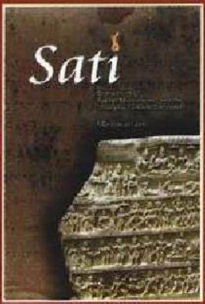

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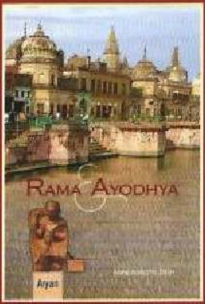
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